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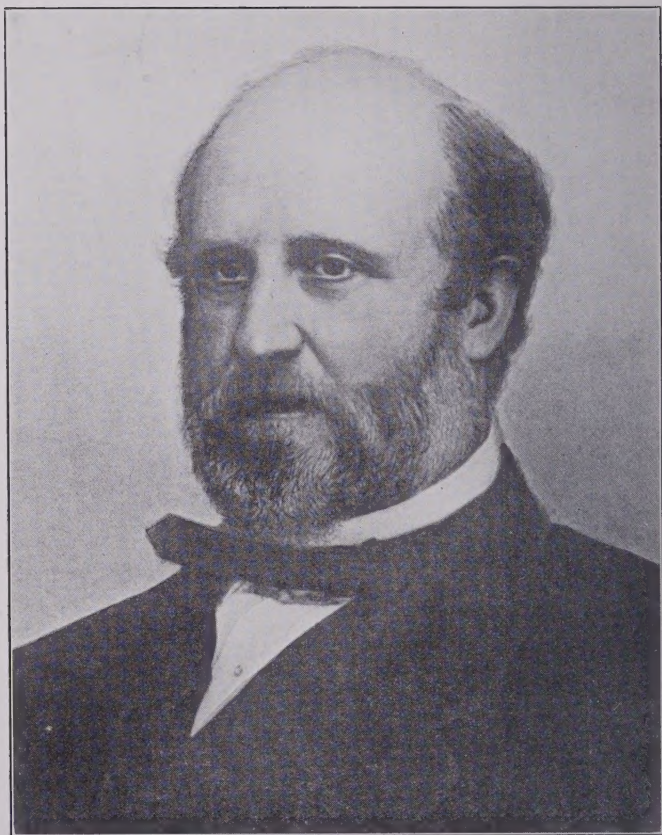
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"HONORABLE" WILLIAM M. TWEED

CITY BOSSES IN THE UNITED STATES

A Study of Twenty Municipal Bosses

By HAROLD ZINK, Ph.D.
*Associate Professor of Political Science
in Depauw University*



DURHAM • NORTH • CAROLINA
DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS
1930

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To
MY MOTHER

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PREFACE

City bosses as well as political bosses in general in the United States have received more or less serious attention from scholars for approximately half a century. The writings which have resulted have usually dealt with bosses in the abstract, although many of them have referred to the more colorful bosses for purposes of illustration. This study differs in that it attempts to analyze a group of specific bosses. Any conclusions are based entirely on dissection of the personalities and careers of twenty municipal bosses. Such a project obviously has its defects. While it points out errors that have resulted from generalizing without proper basis, it necessarily can include but a limited number of bosses—that is, if each boss is to be carefully considered. As far as the score of bosses included in the work here presented are representative, the conclusions are sound. However, while it may be expected that they are fairly typical, it would be beyond reason to assume that they represent city bosses in every particular. But, even so, I am of the opinion that a more accurate understanding of city bosses is to be had from such a study than from one of the general type.

The twenty bosses included in this study have not been taken haphazardly, although there are, of course, certain advantages in using a random group. It has seemed to me that a number of things should be kept in mind in selecting bosses for such a work. In the first place, geography is of some importance and hence, bosses from the Atlantic states, New England, the middle west, the northwest, the south, and the Pacific coast have been chosen. Again, party affiliation may be of some, although not large, significance. Therefore, both the Democratic and Republican parties are represented. There are examples of the boss who veers from party to party, of the boss who starts as a reformer or who turns

reformer, and of the political hermaphrodite. It has seemed important to study both the lone boss and the boss who heads a long established and efficiently organized machine. For this reason I have included bosses who constructed their own organizations as far as they had any and also bosses from such well-known institutions as Tammany Hall and the Philadelphia Republican machine. Finally, it has seemed worthwhile to consider not only those bosses who have dominated entire cities but also a few who, while of great influence, have never completely controlled a city. Some of these latter, such as Martin Lomasney of Boston and Timothy D. Sullivan of New York City, seem to me to rank with city bosses rather than with ward bosses.

The material relating to city bosses is vast in amount, but very little of it is in manuscript form. Bosses have apparently believed that it is wise to think twice before writing a revealing letter, and then not to write it. There is a fair amount of information to be had from memoirs and autobiographies of those who have had contact with city bosses, from public documents of various kinds, and from political histories. Most of the material is either in newspaper files or in the minds of relatives, friends, and enemies. Therefore, while I have consulted memoirs, public documents, and political histories where they exist, a very large part of the information has been gathered from newspaper files and from interviews. Those interested in city bosses owe a considerable debt to the press; they also owe it a good many moments of irritation because of frequent inaccuracies as well as contradictory statements. Although I have attempted by consulting several newspapers in each case to exclude bias, favorable or otherwise, and erroneous information, I am well aware that inaccuracies exist, because where it has been possible to check newspaper statements, the conclusions have frequently not been favorable to the

newspapers, even allowing for human memories and prejudices. In addition to largely supplementing newspaper files with information obtained from relatives, associates, and enemies, it has been possible to further eliminate inaccuracies by submitting the several parts of the study to the scrutiny of persons familiar with the political histories of the cities concerned.

My debt to those who have assisted me is great. Professor William B. Munro inspired my interest in political bosses in his Government 20a at Harvard, supervised a doctor's dissertation which had to do with city bosses, and finally considerably aided me by reading the entire manuscript in its present revised and enlarged form. I am indebted to Professors Hart, Holcombe, and Hanford of Harvard for reading the manuscript in its earlier form as a dissertation and for various suggestions. Mr. Herbert C. Pell, sometime chairman of the State Democratic Committee of New York, generously read a part of the manuscript and furnished introductions. I have referred in the footnotes to the many other persons who have assisted me, but I desire here to thank generally the public officials, directors of municipal research bureaus, college instructors, newspaper officials, librarians, and relatives, associates, and contemporaries of the bosses for their numerous courtesies. I cannot thank by name several of those who have aided me because they have requested otherwise, but I may be permitted to thank them anonymously. Finally I desire to express my appreciation to Professor J. Fred Rippey, editor of this volume, and to the Duke University Press for their patience and considerate treatment.

HAROLD ZINK.

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PART I

CHAPTER I

BOSS BACKGROUNDS

Cartoon bosses are unmistakably Irish. Nevertheless, of a score of American city bosses who are so well-known that their names are household words throughout the country, New York City, including Brooklyn, has cradled twice as many as Ireland. Ireland can lay claim to but three of the twenty, whereas New York has produced six of them.¹ Only five of the score came to the United States from other lands. In addition to the three Irishmen there was one from England and another from Sweden.² Fifteen first saw the light of day in the United States. As has been noted, New York City heads the list with six. Then comes Philadelphia with two. Boston, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and San Francisco, with one each, bring up the rear.³ Rural sections contributed a lonely two of the American-born bosses in contrast to the thirteen of metropolitan centers.⁴ Of the foreign-born only one came from a city.⁵

Ireland can make a somewhat better showing in racial stock than in nativity. Nevertheless, by no means all municipal bosses trace their descent from that isle. Ten of the particular twenty barons under consideration had Irish-born fathers and nine Irish-born mothers.⁶ However, James McManes traced his ancestry eventually to Scotland and Richard Croker to England and Scotland. Although the fathers of

¹ Ireland gave birth to Croker, McManes, and Butler. New York City claims Tweed, Kelly, Murphy, Olvany, Tim Sullivan, and McLaughlin.

² Flinn was born in England and Lundin in Sweden.

³ Durham and Vare belong to Philadelphia. Lomasney claims Boston, Magee Pittsburgh, Cox Cincinnati, and Ruef San Francisco.

⁴ Roger Sullivan was born on a farm near Belvidere, Illinois. "Doc" Ames was born in Garden Prairie, Illinois.

⁵ William Flinn claimed Manchester, England, as native city.

⁶ Croker, Kelly, Murphy, T. Sullivan, Lomasney, McManes, Flinn, R. Sullivan, Butler, and McLaughlin. The mothers of the above, except for R. Sullivan, were also Irish.

"Judge" Olvany and C. L. Magee owned the United States as native land, both paternal great-grandfathers came from Ireland. Five of the bosses had native-born fathers and at least two native-born mothers, while fifteen possessed foreign-born fathers and thirteen foreign-born mothers.⁷ Besides those having a parent or parents from Ireland, "Old Boy" Cox and "Iz" Durham admitted English fathers and Magee and Olvany English mothers. Martin Behrman's father was a German. Both parents of "Poor Swede" Lundin were Swedish and both parents of "Curly Boss" Ruef, French.

New York City and vicinity produced both parents of one of the bosses and the father of another. Philadelphia contributed both parents of another of the twenty barons. New England and Pittsburgh each gave a male parent.⁸ It has already been noted that Mr. Olvany traces his paternal line to Ireland and his maternal line to England. Tweed looked back to Scotch ancestors beginning with his great-grandfather, and Vare discovered his forbears in England. Only two of the twenty bosses could boast of any long line of American antecedents. The Ames family resided for several generations in New England and gained some prominence in Massachusetts, New York, and Ohio. Although the mother of Chris Magee was an Englishwoman, his paternal forbears, in whose veins Irish blood predominated, lived in America considerably before the Revolution and as pioneers crossed the mountains to establish frontier homes.

There seems to be some relationship between the racial

⁷ Tweed, Olvany, Vare, Magee, and Ames had native-born fathers and Tweed and Vare native-born mothers. In most cases the parents are of the same nationality. But in a few cases it has been impossible to accurately determine the birthplace of the mother. This is true of the mothers of Behrman, Cox, Durham, Ames, and Roger Sullivan.

⁸ New York City gave birth to both parents of Tweed and to the father of Olvany. Philadelphia claims the parents of Vare; New England and Pittsburgh claim the fathers of Ames and Magee respectively.

stock of municipal bosses and the dominant racial group of foreign origin in their cities. Of the fifteen barons who were either natives of a foreign country or whose fathers were born abroad, six belonged to the racial group which during at least the early part of their political careers ranked first numerically among all foreign-born groups in their baronies. All of these happened to be Irish. In the cases of "Honest John" Kelly, Martin Lomasney, and James McManes the Irish supremacy lasted as long as they ruled. In the city of Richard Croker the Irish took first place in 1880 but fell to second place in 1890 and 1900, in that of Hugh McLaughlin they exceeded all others in 1870 and 1880 but rated second in 1890, and in the Bowery of "Big Tim" Sullivan the Irish ranked first until pushed out by the Russians and Hebrews during the later part of his career. Five of the bosses belonged to groups of second numerical importance. By the time "Commissioner" Murphy appeared on the scene as boss, the Irish had fallen to second place in New York City and in 1910 they went down to third place in Manhattan and fourth in the entire city. However, in 1910 Americans with both parents of Irish nativity ranked first among all second growth material in Manhattan. Roger Sullivan and Edward Butler, both of Celtic blood, also bossed cities in which those of Irish nativity achieved second place among all the foreign-born. In St. Louis the Irish held that place from 1870 through 1900 or throughout Butler's career. In Chicago they went from second place in 1900 to fourth in 1910 and to sixth in 1920. William Flinn, a native of England but of Irish stock, ruled Pittsburgh where in 1880 the English were second numerically among the foreign-born and the Irish first and in 1890 and 1900 third and second respectively. Martin Behrman of New Orleans belonged to the German group which ranked second throughout his political career. Three of the bosses belonged in

racial stock to the group that stood third numerically among the foreign-born of their bailiwicks. "Judge" Durham, whose ancestry was English, guided the affairs of Philadelphia where the English ranked third in 1900. "Old Boy" Cox, also of English stock, found enough persons of English birth in Cincinnati to give them the third place in 1890 and 1900. In 1910 the English stood sixth in Cincinnati. In the city of "Poor Swede" Lundin the Swedes ranked third in 1900 and fifth in 1910 and 1920. Finally Abraham Ruef, of French stock, belonged to the foreign-born group in San Francisco which stood sixth in line from 1890 through 1910.

Ancestry of note and family trees apparently do not greatly interest municipal overlords. Perhaps it is not strange that there should be this indifference, for not many bosses have ancestors of great accomplishments and bosses live in the present rather than in the past. Only three from among the twenty barons could boast of forbears that were distinctive. Richard Croker claimed a governor of Bermuda, a member of the British House of Commons, and a British army major as ancestors. C. L. Magee probably did even better from an American standpoint. Peter Hogg, an associate of George Washington in the French and Indian Wars, David Hogg, Revolutionary army fighter and frontiersman, and Robert Magee, county commissioner of Allegheny County in the early nineteenth century, all graced his family tree. "Doc" A. A. Ames also came from a family of more than ordinary attainments. In Massachusetts, New York, and Ohio his relatives have been leaders. A brother of his father, who as a frontier physician and leading promoter of the Episcopal Church and Masonic Lodge deserves mention, served as an American consul in Europe. In addition to these three it might be noted that Hugh McLaughlin's father helped build Fort Greene in the War of

1812 and that "Honest John" Kelly married into the family of Cardinal McCloskey, the first American cardinal.

In keeping with the precarious economic position of the homes from which city bosses come, it is not to be expected that their fathers stand out as captains of industry or even as professional leaders. Only one of the score, "Doc" Ames, whose father was a physician, had a father who followed a profession. Two, Edwin Vare and Roger Sullivan, had farmer sires. The father of William Flinn engaged in public contracting. The elder Tweed made chairs and held a partnership in a brush manufacturing concern, the elder Kelly ran a pindling grocery store, and the elder Lomasney made a living as a tailor. Croker's sire occupied himself as superintendent of stables at the prison on Blackwell's Island, while "Judge" Olvany's father labored as a boss truckman and later as an employee of the New York Edison Company. The elder Durham milled flour, the elder Magee was a hatter by trade, and Myer Ruef, Abe Ruef's father, sold fancy goods, then dry goods and real estate, and finally emerged in the city directory as a capitalist. The fathers of George Cox and Charles F. Murphy were casual laborers. Five of the score had fathers of unknown occupation.⁹

A somewhat distinctive feature of a municipal boss's relation to his family probably has some political importance. A surprising number of these bosses lost their fathers at early ages and consequently were forced as mere children to assume at least a part of the burden of breadwinning. Of the twenty at bar the fathers of ten died during the childhood or teen ages of their sons. Martin Behrman was but an infant at the death of his father. Timothy D. Sullivan's father passed away when Tim was seven years of age, and the elder Kelly and Cox died when their sons were only eight years old. Lomasney was eleven years of age, McLaughlin

⁹ T. Sullivan, McLaughlin, Lundin, Butler, and McManes.

thirteen years of age, Magee fifteen years, while Vare, Flinn, and Roger Sullivan were still children or in their early teens when their respective fathers died. Edward Butler emigrated to the United States alone when but eleven years old, and Croker, Murphy, McManes, and Lundin, because their fathers were lazy or without skill as money makers, went to work at early ages to help support their families.

It does not appear that municipal bosses invariably come from large families, although the number of brothers and sisters seems somewhat large in certain instances in comparison with the cautious standards of today. Some have been blessed with numerous brothers and sisters, and others have had few. Richard Croker led the particular group under consideration with ten brothers and sisters. Hugh McLaughlin and Edwin H. Vare lagged not far behind with nine each. Roger Sullivan came from a family of nine children and Charles F. Murphy from one of eight children. The Kellys had seven children, the Ames's six boys, the Tweeds five children, and the Olvanys, Lomasneys, Ruefs, Coxes, and Lundins had four children each. Apparently none of the score were only children, although the exact size of the McManes and Butler families is uncertain.

There seems to be slight uniformity among the twenty city bosses in the matter of age location among brothers and sisters. The theory regarding the importance in relation to achievement of being an oldest child or oldest son is not here borne out. Martin Lomasney stands alone as a first child. It is not certain whether two Lomasney children who died in infancy preceded or succeeded Martin in the family. "Honorable" Tweed was the youngest child in a family of five children and was very much spoiled. Richard Croker ranked as youngest son in a family of eleven and Hugh McLaughlin as the youngest of ten children. Kelly was the fourth child in a family of seven but the elder of two sons. Tim Sullivan

and Abe Ruef were lone boys among several sisters. Murphy, Vare, and Magee stood in the middle of their brothers and sisters as far as age was concerned.

Wealth has produced no American city baron although it has helped some along the way. Six of the twenty under study arose from abject poverty in which actual want crept in.¹⁰ Eight came from poor homes,¹¹ and six were products of moderate circumstances.¹² In keeping with their poverty most of the twenty under discussion grew up in environments far from ideal. Crowded downtown sections, with frequent factories and industrial plants and few open places except dirty streets, surrounded fifteen of them during childhood years.¹³ Then, too, many dwelt in the midst of large foreign populations, usually Irish, and hence found their associations more Celtic than American. Nine of the twenty might be included in the group that thus spent formative years in foreign neighborhoods.¹⁴ Three lived in quiet residential districts, and two enjoyed the atmosphere of a farm.¹⁵

One of the most important similarities takes the form of long residence in the municipality dominated. Every one of the twenty barons resided in his particular city by the time he was nineteen years of age, and twelve were born and grew up in the cities over which they later ruled.¹⁶ William Flinn

¹⁰ Kelly, T. Sullivan, McManes, McLaughlin, Cox, and Butler.

¹¹ Croker, Murphy, Magee, Vare, R. Sullivan, Behrman, Lomasney, and Lundin.

¹² Ruef, Ames, Flinn, Durham, Olvany, and Tweed.

¹³ Kelly, Croker, Murphy, Olvany, T. Sullivan, McLaughlin, Lomasney, McManes, Cox, Flinn, Butler, Behrman, Lundin, Magee, and Durham.

¹⁴ Kelly, Croker, Murphy, Olvany, T. Sullivan, McLaughlin, Butler, Lundin, and Flinn.

¹⁵ Tweed, Ruef, and Ames lived in quiet, residential sections and Roger Sullivan and Vare spent early years on farms or truck gardens.

¹⁶ Tweed, Kelly, Murphy, Olvany, T. Sullivan, Lomasney, Durham, Vare, Magee, Cox, Ruef, and McLaughlin were natives of their bailiwicks.

arrived in Pittsburgh when not a year old, Richard Croker reached New York City in his third year, and "King" McManes came to Philadelphia when eight years old. Martin Behrman had attained an age of only seven months when he accompanied his mother to New Orleans to live. "Doc" Ames moved to Minneapolis at the age of nine, while Fred Lundin blacked shoes in Chicago at the age of twelve years. Roger Sullivan and Edward Butler arrived on the scenes of their future labors at the most advanced years, being eighteen and approximately nineteen years respectively.¹⁷

Although municipal rulers as a whole can boast of no great achievement in the field of formal education, a few of their number have done well. "Colonel" Butler stood at the foot in this respect. He admitted that he had never attended school at all. In all, thirteen of the twenty bosses did not get beyond the grammar grades and some fell far short of even that.¹⁸ Among the other seven there was much diversity. Martin Behrman, counting attendance at night school, proceeded somewhat beyond the eighth grade, while Israel Durham finished grammar school and completed a part of the high school course. Chris Magee enrolled as a special student in Western University without being graduated from high school. The remaining three did somewhat better. George Olvany attended business college and was graduated from New York University Law School. "Doc" Ames matriculated at the Rush Medical School in Chicago and received a medical degree before he attained his majority. Abe Ruef, after winning a place among the honor students at the University of California, was graduated from the law school of the same institution with an excellent record.

¹⁷ Butler's age at this time depends on the date of his birth which is uncertain.

¹⁸ Tweed, Croker, Kelly, T. Sullivan, McManes, McLaughlin, Butler, Cox, Lundin, Vare, Flinn, Murphy, and Lomasney.

The statement has been made that a good education enables a city boss to reach the top somewhat more quickly than the rank and file. The twenty leaders at bar do not establish the accuracy of such a statement. The average length of apprenticeship of the thirteen not completing grammar school was 19.1 years, or, excluding T. Sullivan and Lomasney who required a shorter time to control parts of cities, 20.2 years, of the three with less than a high school education 20.7 years, and of the four with the better educations exactly twenty years. "Judge" Olvany, a graduate of the New York University Law School, came to the helm of Tammany Hall after twenty-seven years of political experience, an apprenticeship which for length is only surpassed by one other.

Except perhaps for unusual interest in fistic matches and gangs, boys later becoming city bosses seem to have substantially the same activities that ordinary lads have. Seven have been leaders of gangs. "Honorable" Tweed led the "Pig Tailers," Dick Croker the Fourth Avenue Tunnel gang, and Tim Sullivan a powerful East Side aggregation. Murphy, Lomasney, McLaughlin, and Cox guided less notorious groups. Dick Croker, Tim Sullivan, Hugh McLaughlin, Martin Lomasney, and George Cox gained considerable reputations as fighters. Murphy, Cox, and Lomasney organized baseball teams, while John Kelly acted Shakespearean plays and defended the Catholics against "Know Nothing" attacks. Roger Sullivan, in spite of his duties as a farm hand, found time to drive the priest from place to place for his services. Six of the bosses manifested much interest in volunteer fire organizations and in their late teens joined such associations.¹⁹ John Kelly climbed through the ranks from private to captain of the Emmett Guards, a local military organization.

¹⁹ Tweed, Kelly, McLaughlin, Croker, Ames, and Behrman.

In order to make pocket money or more often to help in the support of mothers and families these twenty bosses as lads engaged in all sorts of activities. Five of them sold newspapers,²⁰ three blacked shoes,²¹ two made bricks,²² and two worked as farm hands.²³ Bill Tweed sold leather goods and brushes and kept books for a tobacco firm. John Kelly acted as office boy for James Gordon Bennett of the *New York Herald*. Croker apprenticed himself as a machinist in railroad shops, and Murphy labored in a wire factory and caulked ships. Tim Sullivan was printer's devil, McLaughlin a rope-walk boy, McManes a bobbin boy, Lundin a clothing salesman, Durham a dealer in old barrels, Vare a vegetable peddler, Ed. Butler a bellows boy, and Behrman helped his mother in her market stall. George Cox seems to have had the greatest variety of jobs, for he sold papers, blacked boots, ran errands, peddled vegetables, delivered dry goods, worked as butcher boy, and peddled tobacco.

²⁰ T. Sullivan, Cox, Lundin, Flinn, and Lomasney.

²¹ Lundin, Flinn, and Cox.

²² Flinn and Durham.

²³ Vare and R. Sullivan.

CHAPTER II

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF CITY BOSSES

Almost every type of physique can claim at least one representative from among the score of city overlords with which this study deals. "Honorable" Tweed almost wrecked the scales with his approximately three hundred pounds. Edwin H. Vare, with one leg slightly shorter than the other, stood at the opposite pole with less than half of the massive hulk of Tweed. "Poor Swede" Lundin reaches a medium height of some five feet and nine inches and weighs about one hundred and fifty pounds, but altogether, because of a quality of gauntness out of all proportion to his actual measurements, suggests the political reformer of the newspaper cartoons rather than the political boss. Hugh McLaughlin, Edward Butler, George B. Cox, Timothy D. Sullivan, Albert Alonzo Ames, and George Olvany all tipped the scales at about two hundred pounds and stood six feet or thereabouts in height. Richard Croker and John Kelly, with their one hundred and eighty-five pounds and two hundred and thirty pounds of weight respectively and lesser height, represented the stocky type. Thirteen approximated or exceeded the two-hundred-pound mark,¹ four ranged around one hundred and seventy pounds,² two averaged one hundred and fifty pounds or thereabouts,³ and only one weighed less than one hundred and fifty pounds.⁴ Seven of the barons stood six feet or more in height, but in no case did the height exceed six feet and two inches.⁵ Three varied from five feet and ten inches to five feet and eleven inches,⁶ eight ranged

¹ Tweed, Croker, Kelly, Murphy, Olvany, T. Sullivan, Flinn, R. Sullivan, Cox, Ames, McLaughlin, Behrman, and Butler.

² Lomasney, McManes, Durham, and Magee.

³ Lundin and Ruef.

⁴ Vare.

⁵ Olvany, T. Sullivan, McLaughlin, Cox, Flinn, Butler, and Ames.

⁶ Tweed, Kelly, and R. Sullivan.

from five feet and seven inches to five feet and ten inches,⁷ and Edwin Vare, as runt, attained a height of five feet and five inches.

As far as physical good looks are concerned, municipal bosses do not seem to be distinctive. Some have been generously treated by nature while others have fared poorly. The majority are neither dashing handsome nor painfully homely. Chris Magee and "Doc" Ames take the prize among the group for good looks, for both had wide reputations along that line. Four others, including "Judge" Olvany, "Judge" Durham, "Senator" Flinn, and Abraham Ruef, approached physical handsomeness, being above the average in looks. If one prefers a coarse type, "Honorable" Tweed might be inserted in the above group. Nine of the bosses were ordinary in appearance.⁸ Kelly, Croker, Butler, and Lomasney might well be designated "homely."

In spite of the unusual physical energy required in the passage from political novice to boss, bosses are not always free from ill health. At least fourteen of the score under consideration suffered from serious maladies, usually it is true during later years.⁹ "Honest John" Kelly encountered two nervous and physical breakdowns which incapacitated him for some five years and eventually led to his death. "Big Tim" Sullivan had to be committed to an insane asylum. Of the physical ills, diabetes, dropsy, paralysis, rheumatism, and vertebrae of the spine out of joint may be mentioned. Although such an estimate does not mean much, it may be said that lengthy periods of serious illness among the bosses aggregate thirty-eight years. The fact that only

⁷ Croker, Lomasney, McManes, Durham, Magee, Lundin, Murphy, and Ruef.

⁸ Murphy, T. Sullivan, McLaughlin, McManes, Vare, Cox, R. Sullivan, Lundin, and Behrman.

⁹ Tweed, Kelly, Croker, T. Sullivan, McLaughlin, McManes, Durham, Vare, Flinn, Magee, R. Sullivan, Lundin, Butler, and Behrman.

one of the twenty barons died very suddenly and without expectation indicates perhaps something of their physical state.¹⁰

Some barons dress flashily, others nattily, and still others shabbily. Abe Ruef, "Doc" Ames, and Bill Tweed arrayed themselves in gorgeous apparel, sported showy motors or yachts, and altogether delighted in elaborate display. Charles F. Murphy took considerable pains with matters of dress and presented a sightly although not a flashy figure. But "Czar" Lomasney covers himself with such odds and ends that he is conspicuous. Fred Lundin resembles an undertaker of the nineteenth century in his rusty black coat, boiled white shirt, and prominent black tie. Four of the bosses might be classed as conspicuous because of flashy dress and three more as extraordinary because of grotesque or strange clothing.¹¹ Four more dressed very well but conservatively.¹² The remaining nine usually clothed themselves in non-distinctive garb.¹³

The fact that serious dissipation probably does not make a good bed-fellow for one who aspires to rule a city may account for the better than average personal morality of municipal bosses. Although they may be warm supporters of saloons and vice elements because such institutions help maintain their control, they ordinarily desist from the patronage of such establishments themselves. Martin Lomasney once had more liquor saloons in his bailiwick than any other section of Boston, but he refused to drink liquor or even smoke tobacco and delivered to his followers most eloquent addresses on the subject of temperance. Tweed drank heavily until warned by a physician that it might cost him his life.

¹⁰ Charles F. Murphy.

¹¹ Ruef, Ames, T. Sullivan, and Tweed belong to the first group and Lundin, Lomasney, and Butler to the second.

¹² Murphy, Olvany, Croker, and Magee.

¹³ Kelly, McLaughlin, McManes, Durham, Vare, Cox, Flinn, R. Sullivan, and Behrman.

He also established the reputation of frequenting questionable resorts. "Doc" Ames did not emerge from drunkenness for days at a time, and Abe Ruef has been said to have had as many vices as "Priam had children."¹⁴ Kelly, Croker, Murphy, and Olvany of Tammany Hall all either drank moderately or not at all. With the exception of four of the twenty bosses there can be slight criticism on the score of personal morality.

From "Honest John" Kelly the bosses range down to "Colonel" Edward Butler in speaking ability. Mr. Kelly delivered public lectures that brought in more than fifty thousand dollars in receipts. Both "Judge" Olvany and Martin Lomasney speak ably and on the whole unusually effectively. Without enjoying even ordinary talent as a public speaker "Dry Dollar" Sullivan filled any hall in the Bowery when he made the attempt. Abe Ruef possessed such volubility that speaking was the easiest thing in the world for him, while Murphy found it necessary to search long for words and hence spoke with great difficulty. "Old Boy" Cox's voice grew rusty with disuse, and "Colonel" Butler refused to speak in public at all. Of the twenty leaders nine spoke well in public and were not afraid to appear frequently.¹⁵ Five possessed fair ability but seldom used it.¹⁶ Two often made use of their mediocre ability.¹⁷ Three spoke with difficulty on rare occasions,¹⁸ and one burst forth often in spite of his poor success.¹⁹

It is sometimes stated that a successful city overlord must maintain silence on every possible occasion. A study

¹⁴ See Theodore Bonnett, *The Regenerators* (San Francisco, 1911), p. 123.

¹⁵ Kelly, Olvany, Lomasney, Behrman, Flinn, Magee, R. Sullivan, Ames, and Ruef.

¹⁶ Croker, McManes, Durham, McLaughlin, and Lundin.

¹⁷ Timothy D. Sullivan and Vare.

¹⁸ Murphy, Butler, and Cox.

¹⁹ Tweed.

of city bosses by no means bears out such a statement. It is true that "Commissioner" Murphy, perhaps the ablest of recent barons, retained his own counsel to such an extent that he remained a puzzle to the general public throughout his life. But Tim Sullivan, more absolute in the Bowery than Murphy in the city and the immediate means by which Murphy established his leadership, cannot possibly be designated a "silent man." Tweed chattered without constraint, Lomasney booms forth at frequent intervals except to newspaper men, and Abe Ruef had little inkling of the meaning of the maxim, "Silence is golden." Of the twenty bosses nine could not possibly have aimed at silence, for their speech marks them as chatty.²⁰ Four may have attempted to minimize their utterance, although they spoke too frequently to be classed as silent.²¹ Four more spoke when they were interested but usually remained silent.²² Three really broke out in words only when it was essential.²³ One of these three, Fred Lundin, was quite talkative until 1915 when he became the "Mystery Man."

Hard work ordinarily makes for success in politics as well as in other realms, but good luck also counts. No boss ever worked harder than "Honest John" Kelly. Yet many have won far greater distinction in politics. Generally speaking municipal leaders devote more hours to their business than the regulation day requires. Richard Croker once said that a boss "might as well give up the idea for all time of having fun," because "there is no end of work in it."²⁴ However, the same Dick Croker did not work nearly as hard as any one of a dozen other barons. Roger Sullivan expended

²⁰ Tweed, T. Sullivan, Behrman, Magee, R. Sullivan, Butler, Ames, Ruef, and Lomasney.

²¹ McLaughlin, Flinn, Vare, and Olvany.

²² Kelly, Croker, McManes, and Durham.

²³ Cox, Murphy, and Lundin.

²⁴ *New York Tribune*, December 5, 1901.

great energy all through his career and once spoke personally in every ward of Chicago and in every county of Illinois. While he generally controlled primary results, he frequently lost out in the final election. "Doc" Ames became a proponent of the theory that the "people soon forget" and successfully trusted to that human failing rather than to hard labor. Some barons, then, win in spite of little industry, others win with great effort, and still others lose although they work very hard. Ames and Croker were the most easy-going of the group.

Not all bosses possess wealth of personal magnetism. "Honorable" Tweed, in spite of all his faults, exhibited so much jollity and made himself such a good fellow that he drew hordes to his ranks. Chris Magee even surpassed Tweed, for in power of leadership and innate brilliancy he easily takes first place among the twenty bosses. In contrast to Magee, Richard Croker, Charles F. Murphy, and George B. Cox frequently not only failed to attract but actually repelled. Not more than nine of the twenty barons can be classed as greatly gifted with magnetic qualities.²⁵ Three possessed good personalities,²⁶ five fair,²⁷ and three drove away more men than they attracted.²⁸ Sometimes the lack in this sphere came from native coldness, as in the cases of Kelly and Murphy, sometimes from timidity and constraint in mingling with the mass, as in the case of "Old Boy" Cox, and it came from sheer ugliness of personality in the case of Croker.

Perhaps generosity is to be frequently encountered among municipal leaders because it has demonstrated above all other things its efficacy in getting votes. Nevertheless, not all

²⁵ Tweed, Magee, Ames, Durham, T. Sullivan, Olvany, Butler, Behrman, and R. Sullivan.

²⁶ Lomasney, Ruef, and McLaughlin.

²⁷ Lundin, Flinn, Vare, McManes, and Kelly.

²⁸ Croker, Murphy, and Cox.

bosses have used their almsgiving for such a purpose. Six overlords may be designated as unusually generous,²⁹ ten as generous,³⁰ and four as close-fisted.³¹ "Honorable" Tweed and "Big Tim" Sullivan probably gave the most freely, but it was in such an indiscriminate way that neither performed any great service. Each ended up insolvent. Kelly gave largely and undoubtedly chose his objects so carefully that the gifts did much real good. Magee presented the two largest single gifts, both to Pittsburgh. He gave a zoölogical garden for a Christmas present to the children and then left much of his fortune for the establishment of an excellent maternity hospital. Roger Sullivan provided scholarships for the education of young men. Of the group, Croker and Ruef guarded their coffers the most carefully. It is said that Ruef's lawyers had to sue for their fees.³² All of the bosses have quite naturally aided their friends and followers. However, some have limited themselves to that alone while others have given to larger and perhaps more important projects. "Old Man" Butler is a good example of the former class, for he gave liberally to his followers and had a wide reputation for kindness to unfortunates. Nevertheless, he despised any so-called "organized charity" and refused to contribute to such enterprises. In contrast, Hugh McLaughlin buried a large part of the Irish of Brooklyn and gave large sums to followers. In addition, however, he gave an expensive altar to the Brooklyn Pro-Cathedral, interested himself largely in the Berkeley Institute for difficult girls, and generously supported a hospital and children's home. Of the sixteen bosses classified as generous or very generous, ten

²⁹ Tweed, T. Sullivan, Ames, Kelly, McLaughlin, and Magee.

³⁰ Murphy, Olvany, Lomasney, McManes, Durham, Behrman, Vare, Flinn, Roger Sullivan, and Butler.

³¹ Ruef, Cox, Lundin, and Croker.

³² See Dana Galtin, "Great Cases of Detective Burns," *McClure's Magazine*, XXXVI (1910-11), 391.

belong to the first type while six did not limit their giving to constituents.³³

Twelve barons presented an optimistic exterior generally seasoned with a good sense of humor.³⁴ No one would desire a more rollicking person than either "Doc" Ames or William Tweed. Even the stern, unbending Kelly displayed a dry sense of humor on occasion. Five bosses tended to be phlegmatic, although they smiled at times and sometimes made pleasing impressions.³⁵ However, three found it difficult, if not impossible, to thaw the cold which seemed so constantly to beset them. Few ever penetrated beneath the glacial ice of Croker, and while Murphy and Cox had their devoted cronies, they remained unbending figures to the world at large.

To make a career reasonably smooth, nothing avails more than diplomacy and tact even in the task of dominating a city. John Kelly might have saved himself much trouble had he commanded such a trait even in moderate amount. Yet he managed in spite of the handicap to emerge more powerful than others who were more diplomatic. Croker, Flinn, Vare, Lomasney, and McLaughlin meant well enough, but they frequently hurt people by their brusqueness. Chris Magee, Ames, and Tim Sullivan excelled in handling perplexing situations. All of them could send seekers on their way rejoicing, even though they refused their requests. Tact must be numbered among the traits not possessed to any remarkable degree by the rank and file of city bosses. Not more than nine of the score under study commanded any large amount of it.³⁶ Perhaps the rough and tumble, involv-

³³ Kelly, McLaughlin, McManes, Flinn, Magee, and R. Sullivan.

³⁴ Tweed, Olvany, T. Sullivan, Lomasney, Durham, Behrman, Vare, R. Sullivan, Butler, Magee, Ames, and Ruef.

³⁵ Kelly, McManes, Lundin, Flinn, and McLaughlin.

³⁶ Magee, T. Sullivan, Ames, Ruef, R. Sullivan, Durham, Tweed, Olvany, and Behrman.

ing the use of brute force, which necessarily marks the struggle to the top, accounts for the deficiency.

Municipal bosses tend to be loyal to their friends and true to their promises. They may consider anything fair in making war on enemies; but when it comes to those within the fold, they prefer to follow a different policy. Probably not more than three of the score here involved could be called even casually disloyal. "Honorable" Tweed, whose standards were often strikingly peculiar, comforted himself in his days of adversity by remembering that he had stood by his friends long after they had deserted him. Almost all bosses boast that their word is as good as gold. Their boast is not always unexaggerated, but it tends toward accuracy at any rate. Only in the cases of Ruef, Croker, and Ames is there suggestion of disloyalty. A few more were occasionally suspected of forgetfulness in keeping inconvenient promises.

Another trait that might be supposed to influence the success or failure of a boss is excitability. Judging from the twenty here discussed, the majority of municipal bosses veer neither to great excitability nor to calmness. Some of the most powerful barons have managed to accept with tranquillity whatever happened. The quietness with which "Commissioner" Murphy received the repeated demands of 1913-1914 that he give up the Tammany leadership and his invariable sullen reply that he intended to retain it are marvellous examples of how far a boss may go in studied indifference. The "Commissioner's" reaction in the Sulzer case was more apparent. The inflamed action of William Flinn in ousting Commissioner Bigelow from his office in the city government of Pittsburgh may be cited by way of contrast. Roughly dividing the twenty, three, Kelly, Lomasney, and Ruef, were unusually excitable; four, Cox, Mur-

phy, Durham, and Magee, more than ordinarily self-controlled; and the remainder ranged between the two extremes.

It might seem that a politician who reaches the pinnacle in city politics would necessarily be a past master at everything practical and a foe of everything impractical. As a matter of fact by far the majority do keep their feet firmly planted on the earth. Few have been wide readers of books and some have even dispensed with the newspapers. Nevertheless, there are notable exceptions. Abe Ruef devoted himself to music, philosophy, and seven languages. If "Doc" Ames was practical in any respect, he buried it far beneath a passion for publicity and flattery. John Kelly burned the mid-night oil pouring over religious books and narrowly missed the monastery. The "Mystery Man of Chicago" carried on extensive investigations in the field of old-age pensions. Fourteen of the overlords stand out as essentially practical men,³⁷ three were practical the greater part of the time,³⁸ and three while practical at times were again childishly impractical.³⁹

For some bosses an aggressive policy has seemed to be the best in the long run. Others have preferred a cautious one. Fourteen of the twenty under study ordinarily pushed straight ahead without waiting to consider the possible results of their actions.⁴⁰ On the other hand, six moved with more or less care.⁴¹ John Kelly ordinarily fought for what he considered right irrespective of what the prospects happened to be and kept up such a hot and steady battle that his adversaries often dropped from sheer weariness. "Commis-

³⁷ Murphy, Olvany, Croker, Ruef, R. Sullivan, Butler, Magee, Flinn, McManes, Vare, Lomasney, McLaughlin, Cox, and Behrman.

³⁸ Kelly, Tweed, Durham.

³⁹ Ames, T. Sullivan, and Lundin.

⁴⁰ Tweed, Kelly, Croker, T. Sullivan, McManes, Behrman, Varc, Flinn, Lomasney, McLaughlin, Ruef, Butler, Cox, and Ames.

⁴¹ Murphy, Durham, Magee, Lundin, Olvany, and Roger Sullivan.

sioner" Murphy proceeded with considerable caution, sometimes withdrawing from a position, sometimes forcing it, and altogether keeping his opponents guessing what he would do next.

The quality of stubbornness also seems to attach itself rather frequently to city bosses. A considerable number have let it be known that they would listen to opponents of a certain policy and some of them have really maintained an open mind in hearing such arguments. However, once they have made a decision, it has been quite impossible to budge any appreciable number of them. Probably such tenacity to decisions is usually essential; otherwise the great pressure frequently brought to bear would prevent accomplishments. In the case of a boss, such as "Honest John" Kelly, more could probably have been achieved had there not been the stonewall of stubbornness which made any retraction an impossibility. There are ten other barons who stand out because of their tenacity to purpose.⁴² "Doc" Ames might have avoided much disaster by being more stable.

It has been frequently stated that political bosses must be shrewd men. In general this is true in spite of much variety in the degree of shrewdness. Of the twenty city bosses under study a sizable majority must be classed among those fortunate few who are unusually gifted with sound common sense. All of them were fairly incisive. "Commissioner" Murphy, "Judge" Olvany, Chris Magee, and James McManes proved themselves to belong to the first line in this respect. At the other extreme, although not wholly devoid of the quality by any means, may be placed "Doc" Ames who allowed himself to be duped again and again.

A city boss must either construct or steal some sort of an organization. If he seizes an existing machine, he will

⁴² Croker, McLaughlin, Lomasney, Vare, Cox, Flinn, Lundin, Murphy, McManes, and Ruef.

necessarily find it advisable to man the important places with those whom he can trust. Of course if he creates a new organization, he will quite naturally place his friends in positions of importance. In either case he needs to be an excellent judge of men, for otherwise his machine is likely to fail him in time of need. Many bosses have gone down to ruin as a result of deficiency at this point. They have worked diligently and got within sight of the top, only to fall by gathering together the wrong kind of associates and followers. No boss can hope to judge accurately in every case. At least few have done so. As able a leader as "Commissioner" Murphy made more than one costly mistake and as a matter of fact almost wrecked his career on such a rock. "Doc" Ames, of course, did break up because of his pitifully slight acumen in selecting followers. It seems difficult to class more than five of these bosses as superior in this respect.⁴³ Nine possessed good judgment where men were concerned,⁴⁴ and six had no more than fair ability.⁴⁵

⁴³ Olvany, Vare, Cox, Flinn, and Magee.

⁴⁴ Kelly, Croker, McLaughlin, McManes, Durham, R. Sullivan, Lundin, Butler, and Behrman.

⁴⁵ Tweed, Murphy, T. Sullivan, Lomasney, Ames, and Ruef.

CHAPTER III

DOMESTIC AND SOCIAL RELATIONS

On the whole city bosses give reasonable attention to domestic affairs. "Commissioner" Murphy loved his fireside above the average man, and "Honest John" Kelly broke in health at the death of his wife. Even "Honorable" Tweed, with all of his wandering habits, seems to have been genuinely devoted to his family. With three exceptions the twenty barons under study married and established homes. Only Martin Lomasney, Israel W. Durham, and Abraham Ruef preferred the single state. Of the seventeen married bosses "Big Tim" Sullivan had three wives, Dick Croker, John Kelly, and A. A. Ames two each, and the remaining thirteen contented themselves with a single match.¹ "Doc" Ames contributed largely to the death of his first wife by evil conduct and created a humiliating scene at her funeral rites. Then he took the sister of a New England clergyman as a second wife. Richard Croker had not lived with his first wife for more than fifteen years prior to her death in 1914 and shortly thereafter married an Indian maiden thirty years or more his junior in age. "Big Tim" Sullivan separated from his first wife many years before her death and left children by two other women. John Kelly lost his first wife many years before he married as a second wife the niece of the first Roman Catholic cardinal of the United States.

The wives of city barons have not usually distinguished themselves outside of their homes. However, Mrs. Tweed was prominent in church work and Mrs. Hugh McLaughlin in hospital and orphan service. Mrs. Magee belonged to numerous clubs and displayed much interest in art and music, while Mrs. Vare has been an enthusiast at golf and other

¹ Tweed, Murphy, Olvany, McLaughlin, McManes, Vare, Cox, Flinn, Magee, R. Sullivan, Lundin, Butler, and Behrman.

outdoor sports. "Kid" Lundin, the "Poor Swede's" wife, had been her husband's secretary for some years before her marriage. The second Mrs. Croker has achieved notoriety in the long-drawn-out legal dispute with the Croker children over the disposal of the Croker estate. Mrs. Murphy is fond of visiting Atlantic City and sundry other watering places while Mesdames Tweed, Magee, and Croker acquired a taste for European travel.

Except for Magee, Cox, and Lundin all the seventeen married bosses had children. Martin Behrman topped the list with eleven children. Richard Croker had nine. William M. Tweed had eight, and Edward Butler fathered the same number. Then came William Flinn and Edwin H. Vare with six each, John Kelly, Roger Sullivan, and Albert Alonzo Ames with five each, Hugh McLaughlin with four, and the remainder with one or two each. Several of these children have distinguished themselves in one way or another, although the rank and file have been quite ordinary. Not one has risen to be a star of first magnitude in politics, in spite of the fact that many had good opportunities. The children of Roger Sullivan, William Flinn, Hugh McLaughlin, and Martin Behrman appear to be superior to the others. Boetius Sullivan, a Yale man, is a well-known Chicago attorney. The four Flinn boys, three of whom are also Yale graduates, hold prominent places in the business and social life of Pittsburgh, while a daughter has achieved note through political and welfare activity. A daughter of Hugh McLaughlin married W. C. Courtney, the Brooklyn attorney. Stanley Behrman, a captain in the World War, has taken on a part of his father's political mantle. The Tweed girls are chiefly remembered for gorgeous weddings and presents running into the hundreds of thousands of dollars. Their brother William goes down in history as an assistant district attorney and as receiver of the Union Pacific Rail-

way and of the Credit Mobilier of America. One of the Croker girls married an Italian count, a son lifted himself from the ranks by killing himself in pioneer automobile racing in Florida, another son engaged in business, and a third son came to brief notoriety by dying from the effects of opium smoking. One of the Vare boys graduated from the University of Pennsylvania. Three sons of Edward Butler engaged in politics. James J. Butler, a graduate of St. Louis University, held positions as school director and city attorney of St. Louis. He was twice elected a member of the national House of Representatives. A son of "Doc" Ames followed the profession of electrical engineering.

Nepotism may or may not enter into the career of a city overlord to an important extent. Thirteen of the score of barons under consideration depended somewhat heavily on relatives for political aid.² "Big Tim" Sullivan established a regular Sullivan machine, with cousins manning all of the important places. Chris Magee received a start in politics from an uncle, used a nephew to watch the councils, employed a brother to secure franchises for his street railway interests, and finally wrecked his machine in a quarrel with two cousins. "Colonel" Butler brought up his three sons on a diet of politics and depended on them in his later days. Hugh McLaughlin leaned for political advice on "Aunt Nancy," an older sister, and made a nephew chief henchman. "Honorable" Tweed placed some trust in two sons, Dick Croker got public jobs allowing political activities for his father, brother, and two nephews, and "Commissioner" Murphy seems to have received help during early years from two older brothers. The three Vare brothers made a strong triumvirate in politics, and Martin Lomasney, with brother Joe and cousin Dan Kiley, lagged not far behind the Vares.

² T. Sullivan, Tweed, McLaughlin, Vare, Lomasney, Magee, Butler, Ruef, Ames, Murphy, Croker, Lundin, and Behrman.

Abe Ruef used his father for a bookkeeper and cashier and his sister for a stenographer, Lundin employed a nephew, Ames found slight strength in a brother who acted as chief of police, and Behrman made some use of his son. However, Cox, McManes, Kelly, and Olvany relied slightly, if at all, on relatives, and Roger Sullivan, Flinn, and Durham seem to have made no great use of them.

Some bosses content themselves with the "substance of power," while others cannot resist the temptation to maintain a showy house and equipage. Seven of the twenty leaders under study lived in rather high style,³ nine established comfortable although unpretentious residences,⁴ and four lived quite simply.⁵ "Honorable" Tweed made his home in a gorgeous place on Fifth Avenue, sported an expensive steam yacht, and housed his horses in a mahogany stable trimmed with silver. Richard Croker lagged not far behind with a fine house in an exclusive section of New York City, the "Wigwam" at Palm Beach, and a baronial castle "Glencairn" in Ireland. Magee and Flinn both lived in show places of Pittsburgh, and Cox built an expensive residence in Cincinnati. "Duke" Vare occupied a \$450,000 house at Ambler on the outskirts of Philadelphia. Abe Ruef boasted no fine house but drove about in a dashing "Green Lizard" automobile and lived in style. However, "Honest John" Kelly lived simply in every respect, and Timothy D. Sullivan, refusing to leave his Bowery, moved about from pillar to post. Martin Behrman dwelt through the many years of his political career in a palm-surrounded cottage in Algiers. Of all the twenty bosses Martin Lomasney, who flaunts the lack of a dress suit and of an automobile in the public eye, lives the plainest.

³ Tweed, Croker, Magee, Flinn, Cox, Vare, and Ruef.

⁴ Murphy, Olvany, McLaughlin, R. Sullivan, Lundin, Butler, Ames, McManes, and Durham.

⁵ Lomasney, Kelly, T. Sullivan, and Behrman.

The *Social Register* contains the names of only two of the twenty city bosses under consideration. Both Chris Magee and William Flinn occupied prominent places in the social life of Pittsburgh.⁶ They belonged to numerous exclusive clubs, entertained brilliantly, and mingled with the "upper crust" of the city. Mrs. Magee entertained the wife of President Grant and after her husband's death lived in an Italian villa for several years. Nevertheless, city bosses do not ordinarily occupy high social positions, perhaps because they lack the time and to a certain extent because their business is not looked upon with favor in most high social circles. Yet it is doubtful whether the social ostracism attached to a city ruler reaches the intensity generally imagined, for Magee and Flinn show what has been accomplished. "Honorable" Tweed hobnobbed with Jay Gould and James Fisk, Junior, and even shared the hospitality of Fisk's mistress. In spite of his scandalous behaviour "Doc" Ames usually felt little social disapproval. The stewards of the Newmarket race course refused Croker the privilege of training his horses in preparation for the Derby races, and King Edward failed for the first time in any one's memory to extend an invitation to dine at the palace after Mr. Croker had won the Derby. Of the twenty barons under consideration two occupied irreproachable social positions, two had no standing, and the remaining sixteen ranged from fair to indifferent.⁷

If club or lodge memberships indicate anything, city bosses are quite socially-minded. Only seven of the twenty barons apparently did not belong to a club or non-political fraternal organization.⁸ Of course all of them belonged to

⁶ See *Social Register*, XVIII, No. 8, p. 35, and XXXIII, No. 8, pp. 35-36.

⁷ Magee and Flinn make up the first group, and Butler and Lomasney the second.

⁸ Kelly, Croker, McLaughlin, Lomasney, McManes, Vare, and Butler.

their own political clubs. "Colonel" Butler founded the St. Louis Democratic Club, Martin Lomasney the Hendricks Club. In short all had some sort of political aggregations of a semi-social character. Of all the leaders Martin Behrman appears to have been the greatest "joiner." He belonged to at least sixteen business, social, and religious societies, including the Rotary, Knights of Columbus, French Opera, Southern Yacht, Gymnastic, and Elks. "Judge" Olvany, recent Tammany leader, adheres to at least eight organizations, which include the Manhattan Club, Elks, New York Athletic Club, Bellport Country Club, and Delta Chi. Chris Magee held membership in six, Roger Sullivan and Durham in four each, Lundin and Flinn in three each, Murphy, Tweed, and Ruef in two each, and the remainder in at least one. There are five Masons among the twenty,⁹ five Elks,¹⁰ and two Eagles.¹¹ Abe Ruef held a grand trusteeship in the Native Sons of the Golden West before his encounter with the law.

The Roman Catholic Church held the allegiance of exactly one-half of the twenty overlords under study.¹² Eight of the ten who confessed this faith gave it at least fair support, being regular attendants and generous contributors, while two held only nominal membership.¹³ Of the ten who did not profess the Roman faith five allied themselves with Protestant churches, one nominally attached himself to the Synagogue, and four proved indifferent to religious matters. James McManes and William Flinn maintained healthy memberships in the Presbyterian Church. Israel W. Durham belonged to the Methodist Church all his life, C. L.

⁹ Tweed, Durham, Magee, Lundin, and Ames.

¹⁰ Behrman, Cox, T. Sullivan, Olvany, and Ames.

¹¹ T. Sullivan and Ruef.

¹² Kelly, Croker, Murphy, Olvany, T. Sullivan, Behrman, Butler, Lomasney, R. Sullivan, and McLaughlin.

¹³ Butler and T. Sullivan were quite casual.

Magee affiliated with the Methodist Protestant Church, and Edwin H. Vare, although unattached, found himself bound by family ties to the Methodists. All of the Methodists tended to be casual in their religious life; although Mr. Vare erected a church in Philadelphia as a memorial to his mother. Abraham Ruef reserved a seat in the Jewish Synagogue but did little more to show interest. John Kelly, having almost entered the ranks of the clerics, counted his best friends among the clergy and acted as spokesman for the Roman Catholic Church in the United States Congress. Martin Lomasney occupied quite as intimate a place in the church and fought vigorously for his faith in the Massachusetts general court and constitutional convention. George B. Cox, Frederick Lundin, and William M. Tweed were indifferent to religion. "Doc" Ames, in spite of good Episcopalian background, displayed actual hostility to the organized church.

Not all city bosses confine their interest to politics or to business. Seventeen of the twenty found time for avocations of one kind or another. "Honorable" Tweed infused life into the Americus Club, devoted some time to yachting, and raced horses. Reaching such enthusiasm for horses that he spent at least half a million dollars for such property, Richard Croker won both the English and Irish Derbies. He was also interested in fancy dogs. Charles F. Murphy made golf his hobby, with a private course as well as membership in two clubs. John Kelly spent much time lecturing, and Olvany plays golf and enjoys the out-of-doors. "Dry Dollar" Sullivan gambled heavily and raced horses. Chris Magee dallied with publicity as president of the Pittsburgh Press Club, served as a college trustee, fathered newsboys, and played Santa Claus to Pittsburgh. "Doc" Ames found time for game hunting. In addition to spending several weeks each year on fishing and hunting excursions, Hugh

McLaughlin maintained dog kennels and grew flowers. He also attended the theatre quite religiously. Israel W. Durham fished, hunted, amused himself with the theatre, and held the presidency of the Philadelphia National Baseball League, while James McManes made Fairmount Park his hobby. Edwin H. Vare rode horseback. George B. Cox, in addition to attending the theatre and motoring every afternoon, interested himself in the Cincinnati Reds. William Flinn acquired a model farm on which he bred fancy cattle, and Roger Sullivan traveled abroad. In contrast to Edward Butler, who considered "working hard and making money" his hobby, Abe Ruef dabbled in philosophy, art, music, and linguistics. Martin Behrman got his relaxation from attending conventions, horse racing, and gastronomical feats.

Of course city bosses usually receive far more than average publicity in the newspapers. Two of the twenty here involved belonged to press clubs,¹⁴ and at least four owned or controlled newspapers.¹⁵ City bosses have usually complained at the attitude of the press, stating that it has frequently been bitter, much of the time critical, and seldom at all friendly. However, fourteen of the score seem as a rule to have received reasonable treatment, although they sometimes came in for a storm of condemnation.¹⁶ Six of the overlords fared very well, for newspapers in their respective baronies went so far as to frequently eulogize them.¹⁷ Even in the former class the press commented favorably at times on Kelly, McLaughlin, Murphy, Ames, and Roger Sullivan. Cartoons have caused municipal barons much more discomfort than editorials or news items, because, as Tweed once explained, everyone can comprehend a cartoon and few bother to read editorials. The drawings of Thomas Nast

¹⁴ Magee and Behrman.

¹⁵ Tweed, Kelly, Magee, and Roger Sullivan.

¹⁶ Tweed, Croker, Murphy, Kelly, McLaughlin, McManes, Durham, Cox, Lundin, Butler, Ruef, Vare, Ames, and R. Sullivan.

¹⁷ Behrman, Magee, Lomasney, Flinn, Olvany, and T. Sullivan.

goaded Tweed to such fury that he was almost to be pitied. John Kelly suffered deeply from caricatures during his last years, although earlier he had ignored them. However, Dick Croker rather liked to see his grizzled face in the papers and published a large collection of cartoons that featured himself.

Two of the twenty bosses actually served terms in prison and several others narrowly escaped. "Honorable" Tweed spent one year on Blackwell's Island and then was incarcerated in Ludlow Street jail until death. "Curly Boss" Ruef worked out four years and five months of a fourteen year sentence to San Quentin prison in California. "Colonel" Butler received a prison sentence of three years but saved himself from actual confinement by an adverse decision of the Missouri Supreme Court. Likewise "Doc" Ames escaped a six-year term in prison by the intervention of an appellate court. Six other bosses came to indictment for alleged offences varying from perjury to murder. However, all either won out in the trial or succeeded in having a *nolle prosequi* entered. "Big Tim" Sullivan frequently went to court for street and bar-room brawls. With Tweed the greater part of prison days resulted from inability to pay some six million dollars damages in a civil suit. Ruef, Ames, and Butler came to trial for bribery, Croker secured immunity by arrangement with the district attorney after a jury had disagreed in the matter of convicting him of the murder of John McKenna, and Cox succeeded in having an indictment for perjury quashed and a trial for misappropriation of bank funds to the amount of \$115,000 discontinued. Charles F. Murphy escaped trial on an indictment charging him with defrauding the United States of excess profit taxes. In a sensational trial charging Fred Lundin with conspiracy to defraud the Chicago board of education of approximately one million dollars he retained Clarence Darrow and won the verdict. Two of the bosses faced serious civil suits. Durham found himself the defendant in a suit

brought by the city of Philadelphia to recover five million dollars alleged to have been wrongly retained in the construction of a water filtration plant. William Flinn fought a similar suit to recover \$118,000 in connection with the defalcation of a public official in Pittsburgh. Only eight leaders remained free from prison, trial, or indictment.¹⁸

While political bosses may ordinarily be interested in their own pockets to the exclusion of everything else, nevertheless, as already noted, some of them have been philanthropists. Seven of the twenty bosses made public presentations that cannot be fairly ignored. The most important gifts were made by C. L. Magee of Pittsburgh who gave a \$100,000 zoo to the children of his city, a newsboys' home, a \$15,000 pathological laboratory, and finally left a very considerable sum in his will for the establishment of the Elizabeth Steele Magee Maternity Hospital, an outstanding institution of its kind in the country. Hugh McLaughlin, the "Grand Old Man of Brooklyn," gave a marble altar to the Pro-Cathedral, largely supported St. Mary's Hospital and St. Vincent's Home for Boys, and greatly interested himself in the Berkeley Institute for difficult girls. John Kelly established a bursary at the American College in Rome and gave windows and paintings to old St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York. "Duke" Vare, the "Apostle to the Poor," built the Abigail Vare Methodist Episcopal Church and contributed to the support of three hospitals. Roger Sullivan provided scholarships for educating promising young men and also aided the St. Vincent de Paul Society of Chicago and St. Mary's Training School. "King" James McManes put his hand deep into his pocket and fully repaid depositors of a defunct bank in which he had been interested, although it cost him half a million dollars.

¹⁸ Kelly, Olvany, McManes, Vare, Magee, Behrman, R. Sullivan, and McLaughlin.

CHAPTER IV

MUNICIPAL BOSSES AND BUSINESS

Along with their political activities city bosses usually carry on some business, at least during early days and in most cases all of the time. Three of the twenty leaders under study started out as young men in the practice of a profession. "Judge" Olvany and Abe Ruef were lawyers and "Doc" Ames a physician. "Commissioner" Murphy, once a horsecar driver, and "Old Boy" Cox, a gambling manipulator, came to the top as saloon keepers, and "Big Tim" Sullivan, a theatrical operator, kept a saloon along the way to his lordship. "Duke" Vare started out as peddler and ashman, and "Senator" Flinn as brickmaker and steam-fitter. Both constructed public works and handled public contracts of various sorts, while "King" McManes, who early spun cotton, and "Czar" Lomasney, who spun metal, "smashed" baggage, swung a pick for the city, lighted street lamps and dealt in real estate. "Poor Swede" Lundin, starting out as clothing salesman and milkman, manufactured a soft drink, patent medicines, and steel doors and in addition established a mail order business. "Honorable" Tweed made chairs and brushes, although he soon abandoned his trade and announced that he would be a "statesman." "Honest John" Kelly built up a prosperous business cutting soapstone and setting grates. "Judge" Durham dealt in flour after a street cleaning career. "Colonel" Butler shod horses and pounded out iron. And "Old Man" McLaughlin, after laboring as a dock hand and selling fish, hired labor for the Brooklyn Navy Yard. Roger Sullivan began as a mechanic in railway machine shops but later served as an officer of the Ogden Gas Company. Martin Behrman held a position as cashier of a small store for a time, then obtained a clerkship in a grocery store, later acquired an interest in a

retail grocery, and finally became a traveling salesman. Only Chris Magee began his career in public office as a youth.

City bosses give the impression of being more able at politics than they are at business, which on the whole is quite natural. Nevertheless, some of them have done remarkably well in their business ventures and could undoubtedly have distinguished themselves in that field. William Flinn especially stands out as an illustration. Mr. Flinn possessed to an unusual extent the qualities which contribute to great success in business. Chris Magee and James McManes also rated high in this respect. Of the twenty bosses perhaps not more than four could be included in the extraordinary group.¹ An additional fourteen might be ranked as of good business ability² and the remaining two as poor.³

With the possible exceptions of "Doc" Ames, John Kelly, Martin Behrman, and "Judge" Olvany the twenty city barons kept the quest for gold fairly well to the fore in their lives. Dr. Ames sought to gratify a passion for approbation, Kelly seems by the admission of his enemies to have kept himself free from an overwhelming love for material profit, and George Olvany announced in connection with his acceptance of the call to the leadership that he would resume private law practice and "scrupulously comply with the ethics of the profession regarding the clients by whom retained and the business accepted."⁴ Nevertheless, in spite of the common purpose to profit by the opportunities offered in connection with the leadership, not a great many amassed large fortunes. Most bosses handle large sums of money. However, to successfully support a political machine requires the expenditure of huge sums, and some barons have found

¹ Flinn, Magee, McManes, and McLaughlin.

² Kelly, Croker, Murphy, Olvany, Lomasney, Durham, Vare, Cox, R. Sullivan, Lundin, Butler, Ruef, Tweed, and Behrman.

³ Ames and T. Sullivan.

⁴ *New York Times*, July 15, 1924, 2:1.

this a large drain upon their personal means. It seems likely that several bosses, among whom may be mentioned James McManes, spent many thousands of dollars every year out of their own pockets for such a purpose. Of the eighteen barons who have completed their political careers ten amassed fortunes of at least a million dollars. Considering the fortunes accumulated by contemporaries in other fields offering no greater opportunities such a number is by no means excessive, especially when it be stated that only two of the number passed the four million mark. William Flinn left an estate which was appraised for tax purposes at \$11,342,679.31 and takes first place among the score. Chris Magee accumulated somewhat more than \$4,450,802.09 in real and personal property. Richard Croker probably amassed a fortune in excess of three million dollars, although the transfer of portions before his death and the fluctuating value of a Florida real-estate holding make it difficult to accurately arrive at a figure. Hugh McLaughlin achieved a fortune of approximately three million dollars and James McManes one of \$2,486,205.73. According to valuation Roger Sullivan left property under his will worth \$1,503,607, while Israel W. Durham created an estate officially appraised at \$1,054,292. Tax experts appraised the estate of George B. Cox at approximately \$1,100,000 and that of Charles F. Murphy at slightly in excess of two million dollars.

Rumor almost invariably ascribes far greater worldly goods to a municipal boss than he actually has. "Honest John" Kelly, in spite of his opportunities, was worth only about half a million dollars, Edwin H. Vare left \$595,191 in property, and "Colonel" Butler managed to accumulate \$800,000. "Honorable" Tweed admitted on the witness stand that his fortune had once reached the two and a half million dollar mark. However, he died with virtually nothing left. Timothy D. Sullivan, credited with being a mil-

lionaire even after his death, turned out after years spent in untangling his estate to have been long insolvent. "Doc" Ames brings up the rear, although he did not actually die a bankrupt. His total assets, including all personal belongings and bank accounts, at death amounted to but \$1,413.94.

Altogether it seems quite certain that city bosses make their money fully as honestly as their compatriots in the business world. Some have stolen outright from the public treasury, it is true. But Tweed, the most notorious peculator, compared not unfavorably at this point with his business associates Jay Gould and James Fisk, Junior, who scuttled the Erie Railroad. In the case of Abraham Ruef and Patrick Calhoun of the San Francisco street railways it would be a matter of the pot calling the kettle "black." An attempted contrast or comparison of Edward Butler and Robert M. Snyder, capitalist, would result in the same impasse. Yet both Calhoun and Snyder had standing in reputable business circles. Accusations charging direct thievery have been brought against a fairly large proportion of city bosses. Among the twenty under study suspicion attached itself to Tweed, Cox, Lundin, Durham, Flinn, Ruef, Butler, and Ames. "Honorable" Tweed alone received conviction by a jury, although "Doc" Ames, Abe Ruef, and "Old Man" Butler were convicted of receiving or offering bribes in connection with city affairs. To what extent city rulers personally profit from assessments levied on office-holders, blackmail laid on vice elements, and forced or voluntary contributions from corporate interests will probably never be definitely known. Dame Rumor connects many of them with such monies, but it is to be feared that she often errs. Practically every city suffers from such evils either at intervals or all the time. However, the mere fact that such ills exist does not involve the city boss very definitely, although from the case of Richard Croker and the New York City

reform of the nineties it can be seen that the overlord can ordinarily put a stop to such practices temporarily, if he chooses to do so. On the whole it seems probable that political machines have received aid from questionable sources quite frequently but that the boss rarely profits personally.

Some political bosses make and lose money by speculating on the stock market. Tweed, Croker, Tim Sullivan, McLaughlin, McManes, Cox, Murphy, Flinn, Magee, Roger Sullivan, and Butler all speculated on Wall Street or on other exchanges. Chris Magee owned stock in more than one hundred concerns at his death, and "Big Tim" Sullivan owed August Belmont \$242,923.51 on account of Interborough Rapid Transit stock alone. Real estate more or less largely contributed to the fortunes of Croker, Kelly, Murphy, Lomasney, Magee, Butler, Ruef, McManes, and Hugh McLaughlin. Public contracting constituted a gold mine for Vare, Flinn, and Butler and held prominence in the cases of Tim Sullivan, Martin Lomasney, and Israel Durham. Tweed, Butler, McManes, Magee, and Flinn profited from the steam railroads and McManes, Tweed, McLaughlin, Butler, Magee, and Cox from street railways. McManes, McLaughlin, Flinn, Magee, and Roger Sullivan made money out of public utilities other than transportation. Cox, McLaughlin, Behrman, Magee, McManes, Tweed, Roger Sullivan, Butler, and Lomasney were interested in banks and trust companies, Tweed and Magee in insurance companies, while Tim Sullivan, Cox, and Butler held extensive blocks of stock in theatrical or motion picture concerns. Tweed, Murphy, and Butler owned hotels while Murphy, Cox, and Tim Sullivan owned liquor saloons. Croker stood out as a pioneer in the automobile industry. Timothy D. Sullivan, Flinn, Magee, and Roger Sullivan possessed mining stock, some of which apparently had slight value. Tweed, Magee,

Roger Sullivan, and Kelly owned parts of newspapers, Behrman part of a machinery and foundry company, Roger Sullivan a substantial interest in a cracker and baking company of large proportions, Edward Butler numerous blacksmith and horseshoeing shops, and Lundin differed from the others by engaging in the soft drink, patent medicine, and mail order businesses. A quarry swelled the receipts of Lomasney and the flour business the income of Durham. William Flinn had large holdings in lumber, coal, oil, and building concerns. Both Flinn and Magee interested themselves in steel. Olvany, Ames, and Ruef depended on professional fees to a varying extent.

Considering the favors at the disposal of city bosses it should not seem strange that the majority have close corporate connections. Public service companies of all kinds desire franchises, banks crave public monies, and certain industries require dock, street, and switch privileges. Many of them approach the boss and offer a substantial return for his good-will. A glance at the preceding paragraph will show how intimately the various barons have allied themselves with these interests or established interests of their own. Edward Butler, William M. Tweed, and Abraham Ruef stand out most prominently as agents for numerous corporations. Cox, Magee, Flinn, McManes, and Roger Sullivan gained control of banks, street railways, and gas companies through their political power. "Honest John" Kelly seems to have remained aloof from corporations, Lomasney bays at corporations and hides any close connections deep down in his cellar, and Ames attended to other matters.

Contrary to a general notion, municipal bosses apparently do not object that their names be openly associated with business enterprises. Only three of the score under study reveal no directorships or offices in business firms.⁵ William Flinn,

⁵ Kelly, Murphy, and Ames.

with five presidencies, one chairmanship, and seven directorships, perhaps takes first place in number of business associations; but Chris Magee, with two presidencies and at least fifteen directorships; Roger Sullivan with three presidencies, and several directorships; George B. Cox, with three presidencies, one chairmanship, one vice presidency, and numerous directorships; James McManes with two presidencies and several directorships; and Tweed with at least five directorships, all follow closely. Some of the concerns which city bosses have officered or directed are: Erie Railroad, Brooklyn Bridge, Fairfield Insurance Company, Auto-Truck Company, Cincinnati, Dayton, and Toledo Traction Company, World Film Corporation, Shubert Theatres, Marcus Loew Amusement Company, Western Insurance Company, Sawyer Bisquit Company, Great Lakes Dredge and Dock Company, Gulf Oil Corporation, Pittsburgh Coal Company of New Jersey, Arkansas Fuel Oil Company, Tenth National Bank of New York, People's Trust Company of Brooklyn, People's Bank of Philadelphia, Cincinnati Trust Company, and American Bank of New Orleans.

CHAPTER V

FROM NOVICE TO BOSS

Except for "Honest John" Kelly and "King" McManes all of the twenty city overlords jumped into the political swim as soon as they reached legal age or before. Mr. Kelly, although active in fire department and military company, apparently took no great interest in politics until his twenty-sixth year. James McManes received his naturalization papers shortly after his twenty-first birthday and soon entered the game. Obviously it is difficult to set a specific age at which a boss enters politics, for the process is a gradual one and political activity before voting age takes a somewhat different form from that of later years. Tweed, Croker, Murphy, Tim Sullivan, Lomasney, Vare, Flinn, Magee, and Cox seem to have played a more or less active part in local politics before they reached their majority. The others, except for Kelly and McManes, entered about the time they became twenty-one years of age.¹

Motives impelling entrance into politics vary considerably. An important group, because they led powerful gangs, received the attention of ward leaders and were induced to cast in their following. Richard Croker, William M. Tweed, Charles F. Murphy, Hugh McLaughlin, George B. Cox, and Timothy D. Sullivan fall into this category, for each generated gangs more or less well-known. On the other hand William Flinn, Martin Lomasney, George B. Cox, Edward Butler, Edwin H. Vare, C. L. Magee, Hugh McLaughlin, James McManes, and Charles F. Murphy grew up in a political atmosphere. Because older brothers, relatives, or associates held places in the organization, they quite naturally followed in their footsteps. Five of the barons came up

¹ Olvany, McLaughlin, Durham, Roger Sullivan, Lundin, Butler, Ruef, Ames, and Behrman.

through volunteer fire departments.² Eight of them needed jobs or contracts which might be obtained through political activity.³ "Judge" Olvany and Abe Ruef entered as young lawyers looking for a practice. "Doc" Ames made the break, led on by popularity gained during the Civil War and by free medical attendance. "Poor Swede" Lundin desired to stop infringement on his soft drink business, and "Old Boy" Cox wished to end police interference in his saloon. John Kelly, after a long struggle with the "Know Nothings" in defence of the Roman Church, decided to strike at the root of the trouble and extirpate the "Know Nothing" political control in his ward or district. Only Chris Magee seems to have started out with any definite idea and program for becoming boss.

The time intervening between entrance into politics and assumption of the lordship is ordinarily lengthy. Tim Sullivan and Martin Lomasney worked for about ten and sixteen years respectively before they achieved the coveted position, and in both their cases domination extended to a section of a city and not to an entire municipality. Flinn, Cox, and McLaughlin appear to have compassed their apprenticeship the most rapidly of all the twenty bosses, although Ruef with sixteen years, Magee with eighteen years, and Ames with nineteen years reached the pinnacle in less than twenty years.⁴ The remaining twelve required from twenty to twenty-eight years to reach the top in their respective cities.⁵ Vare served an apprenticeship of twenty-eight years, Olvany put in twenty-seven years, Lundin labored for twenty-six

² Tweed, McLaughlin, Ames, Kelly, and Behrman.

³ Croker, Murphy, Lomasney, Durham, Vare, Flinn, R. Sullivan, and Behrman.

⁴ William Flinn served ten years and George B. Cox and Hugh McLaughlin fifteen years each.

⁵ Tweed, Kelly, Croker, Murphy, Olvany, McManes, Durham, Vare, R. Sullivan, Lundin, Butler, and Behrman.

years, and Murphy gave over twenty-four years to preparation.

By the time apprentice days have passed, city bosses must generally admit forty or more years of age. However, Tim Sullivan and Martin Lomasney happened to be twenty-eight and thirty-three years respectively when they took over bailiwicks embracing a part of a city. Flinn, Cox, and Magee, with thirty-one, thirty-three, and thirty-four years respectively to their credit, as well as McLaughlin with thirty-six years and Ruef with thirty-seven years, reached the leadership before they attained such years. Thirteen overlords ranged in age from forty to fifty-one when they came to the top. Tweed and Ames numbered a bare forty years, Durham and Behrman forty-one years, Croker and Roger Sullivan forty-three years each, Murphy and McManes forty-four years each, Lundin forty-seven years, Olvany forty-eight years, and Vare forty-nine years. Edward Butler was either forty-one or forty-nine years old when he became boss of St. Louis, depending on the date accepted for his birth. "Honest John" Kelly had reached the half century mark when he began his reign over New York City.

From novice to boss requires the crossing of much country. The roads followed have been numerous. "Doc" Ames trusted largely to luck and to the backing of Civil War comrades, while Chris Magee drew up a detailed plan which he carried out step by step in conjunction with Flinn. With few exceptions the first step must be control over a ward or district. Such control involves stringent selection and the survival of the fittest and usually entails the use of brute force. Of the score under consideration only Ames and Magee seem to have abbreviated this first step, and both maintained some activity in ward politics, although they do not seem to have become definite ward leaders. While the

path to the top has commonly been well-beaten as far as the ward or district leadership, it branches into numerous dim trails after that stage. Sometimes by combination with other sectional leaders who do not aspire to the higher level, as in the case of "Commissioner" Murphy, sometimes by coöperation with powerful state bosses and the elimination of other local leaders by a process of evolution, as in the case of "Old Boy" Cox, sometimes by taking advantage of unusual circumstances such as strikes, as in the case of Abe Ruef, sometimes by a fight-to-the finish with established bosses, as in the case of Roger Sullivan, and again by succession upon death or retirement, as in the cases of Durham and Croker, the final goal is reached. Few aspirants draw up a definite map of the several stages as did Magee. Rather they journey from station to station, making plans for the next stage of the trip when the last has been completed.

Among the various factors, such as physical force, circumstances, combinations, succession, corporate support, underworld support, and individual initiative, that enter into the making of a city boss, it seems from this particular study that circumstances, combinations, and conscious initiative on the part of the boss himself rate above the rest. That is not to say that the other factors are unimportant. Indeed physical force has had a place in more of the careers than any other single factor, but the place has not been so bulky. In the rise of seven of the bosses, physical force entered in largely,⁶ in nine it played a fair part,⁷ and in four a minor part.⁸ Corporations and underworld interests frequently aid a city boss in retaining his throne. However, they do not often place him there in the beginning. Of all the score Roger Sullivan seems to have received the most notable aid

⁶ Tweed, Kelly, Croker, T. Sullivan, Cox, Flinn, and Butler.

⁷ Murphy, McLaughlin, Lomasney, McManes, Durham, Vare, R. Sullivan, Lundin, and Behrman.

⁸ Olvany, Ames, Ruef, and Magee.

from business interests in achieving the leadership. Not one of the score at stake largely owed his position in the first place to the support of vice. Succession, on the other hand, has played a more important part. In the careers of four barons, Croker, Olvany, Durham, and Lundin, it stands perhaps preëminent. Ten of the twenty bosses owed their success in no small measure to circumstances over which they had little or no control.⁹ The Civil War directly or indirectly helped six of them. "Doc" Ames climbed into power as a Union officer, while McManes, McLaughlin, and Tweed ensconced themselves as bosses during the Civil War decade when people thought of military affairs rather than of municipal politics. Magee and Flinn did not directly profit from the war, but they were favored by the unusual growth of Pittsburgh during the seventies which in part was traceable to the Civil War. The Tweed scandals gave "Honest John" Kelly his opportunity. Unusual bitterness among the Republicans of Chicago greatly furthered the ambitions of Lundin. An agency for a patented horseshoe which attracted the horse car company of St. Louis helped "Colonel" Butler. Abe Ruef took advantage of a teamster's strike which laid open class consciousness in San Francisco. Alliances and similar arrangements made it possible for twelve of the barons to reach the top.¹⁰ Of course, some of them might have got there regardless, while on the other hand some would have failed. These combinations took many forms. In the cases of Durham, Cox, and Behrman they involved influential state leaders. In the other careers local leaders featured. Nine of the bosses should receive credit for unusual initiative, involving shrewdness and hard work, which helped mightily in their upward climb.¹¹

⁹ Tweed, McManes, Ames, McLaughlin, Magee, Flinn, Kelly, Lundin, Butler, and Ruef.

¹⁰ Tweed, Murphy, McManes, Durham, Vare, Cox, Flinn, Magee, R. Sullivan, Lundin, Behrman, and McLaughlin.

¹¹ Tweed, Lomasney, McManes, Vare, Magee, R. Sullivan, Lundin, Butler, and Behrman.

CHAPTER VI

MUNICIPAL BOSSES AS POLITICIANS

Not one of the score of city bosses under study has enjoyed an unbroken rule of absolutism throughout his career as overlord, however powerful he may ordinarily have been. Only a few have approached complete domination even for a majority of the years that they have ruled. Some bosses, in spite of all their efforts, find it impossible ever to control completely. The Tammany bosses have usually had at their disposal all offices in New York County on at least one occasion during their time, for a much longer period they have exercised partial control, and with few exceptions they have at times lost everything in the way of public offices. "Honorable" Tweed, "Honest John" Kelly, Dick Croker, "Commissioner" Murphy, and "Judge" Olvany all had at times good working majorities in the board of aldermen, a faithful group in the state legislature, loyal heads of all city departments, a sizable representation among the judges, a few henchmen in the United States Congress, and a sympathetic mayor of the city. But Kelly and Murphy experienced recalcitrant mayors and at intervals had trouble with the board of aldermen. "King" James McManes at times practically owned the government of Philadelphia. Yet on several occasions he suffered defeat and once stepped down as boss for a time. His successors, "Judge" Durham and "Sunny Jim" McNichol, failed to reach complete control even for a short time. And although "Duke" Vare succeeded to a larger extent, it has been disputed whether he ever absolutely ruled. "Senators" Magee and Flinn dictated to Pittsburgh for an aggregate of many years but several times found themselves with a disobedient city. Seventeen of the twenty barons have for at least a brief period ruled almost absolutely.¹ "Doc" Ames seems to have had the slightest control.

¹ This number excludes Ames, Durham, and probably R. Sullivan.

All of the twenty city barons displayed some interest in state politics; although with the possible exceptions of Tweed, Murphy, Cox, and Roger Sullivan, they did not dominate in that sphere. "Doc" Ames ran for governor in Minnesota and claimed that the election was stolen from him. "Honest John" Kelly set up a convention of his own when the regular state Democratic convention refused to accede to his demands and by running for governor himself threw the election to the Republicans. However, Dick Croker professed to have sufficient to occupy his attention in New York City and scored "Commissioner" Murphy for activity in state affairs. Four of the leaders played most important parts in the politics of their respective states,² and sixteen exerted considerable influence. No Democrat so nearly had his own way in New York State as Charles F. Murphy during the later years of his political career. Nine of the bosses at one time or another occupied seats in state legislatures,³ six were members or officers of state party committees,⁴ and almost all frequently attended state party conventions.

National politics interest municipal bosses to a greater extent than has sometimes been supposed. Four of the particular twenty barons under study sat in Congress,⁵ and three others were defeated for seats therein.⁶ Three of them were members of national committees. Roger Sullivan represented Illinois on the Democratic national committee for twelve years, and Magee and Flinn performed a similar service for Pennsylvania on the Republican and Progressive national committees respectively, although for a shorter time.

² Murphy, Cox, Roger Sullivan, and Tweed.

³ Tweed, T. Sullivan, Lomasney, Durham, Vare, Flinn, Magee, Lundin, and Ames.

⁴ Tweed, Murphy, Lomasney, Magee, Behrman, and Lundin.

⁵ Tweed, Kelly, Lundin, and T. Sullivan.

⁶ Ames, Roger Sullivan, and James McManes.

"Old Boy" Cox refused a seat on the Republican national committee in 1904 but later allowed his lieutenant, Rud Hy-nicka, to accept. With perhaps three exceptions all attended national conventions.⁷ William Flinn leads off with eight conventions to his credit, Magee and Roger Sullivan follow with seven each, and Durham and Cox lag not far behind with five each to their credit. "King" McManes helped nominate Abraham Lincoln in 1860, bitterly fought Grant in 1880, and defeated the wishes of Senator Quay in 1888. Roger Sullivan generally received credit for starting the boom that made Woodrow Wilson Democratic nominee in 1912. Having occupied a place of some importance at the San Francisco convention in 1920 Charles F. Murphy, had he lived, would doubtless have played a far greater part in the New York convention of 1924 for which he had groomed Alfred E. Smith.

Juicy plums in the form of public offices and jobs quite generally cause city barons to pause and partake. Of the twenty leaders all except Edward Butler held at least one public position. "Colonel" Butler stood aloof from all temptations of this sort, although his son served as St. Louis school-director and city attorney. "Curly Boss" Ruef held no out-and-out public office, but he did hold a position in the administrator's office and later attempted to seat himself in the office of district attorney. Seventeen overlords held two or more public offices during their lives, thirteen three or more, nine at least four, seven held five or more, six held six or more, four occupied seven or more, and "Honorable" Tweed ensconced himself in eight public positions and failed to receive election to two more. Mayor Behrman achieved ten public offices or jobs.⁸ Martin Lomasney served twelve

⁷ Records do not mention Lundin, Butler, and T. Sullivan.

⁸ The bosses held positions as follows: Magee and Croker 7; McManes and Lomasney 6; Olvany 5; Kelly, Flinn, and Ames 4; T. Sullivan, Durham, and Cox 3; and the remainder two or less.

terms in the lower house of the Massachusetts general court. "Honest John" Kelly held each of his four offices two terms. Timothy D. Sullivan sat in the New York legislature for almost twenty years and in the United States Congress for three terms. "Doc" Ames won election to the office of mayor four times and Martin Behrman was chosen mayor of New Orleans five times. At least nine barons failed to receive election although they were candidates for office. Tweed missed out on the office of sheriff and Kelly on the office of governor. Lundin was defeated for city clerk of Chicago, Roger Sullivan for a seat in the United States Senate, Behrman for mayor of New Orleans, Cox twice when he aspired to be county clerk, and "Doc" Ames failed to win the governorship of Minnesota, a seat in Congress, and the mayor's office in Minneapolis. Abe Ruef did not secure the office of district attorney nor Hugh McLaughlin the office of sheriff. Martin Behrman's years in public positions aggregate forty-nine, James McManes' forty-two, William M. Tweed's thirty-six, Martin Lomasney's thirty-three, C. L. Magee's twenty-nine, Timothy D. Sullivan's twenty-three, and Richard Croker's and William Flinn's total twenty. The average of the score exceeds eighteen years.

Among the public positions filled by city bosses there is almost every type. Seven barons sat in city councils or boards of aldermen.⁹ Nine were members of state legislatures,¹⁰ and four served in the national Congress.¹¹ Three got themselves places on school boards,¹² seven handled public funds,¹³ four filled legal positions,¹⁴ three had to do

⁹ Tweed, Kelly, Croker, Olvany, Lomasney, Cox, and Ames.

¹⁰ Tweed, T. Sullivan, Lomasney, Durham, Vare, Flinn, Magee, Lundin, and Ames.

¹¹ Tweed, Kelly, Lundin, and T. Sullivan.

¹² Tweed, McManes, and Behrman.

¹³ Kelly, Croker, McManes, Durham, Magee, Behrman, and R. Sullivan.

¹⁴ Olvany, Durham, Ruef, and McManes.

with enforcing the law or holding accused persons,¹⁵ and three kept public records.¹⁶ Six of the bosses held fire commissionerships,¹⁷ five supervised public works,¹⁸ two looked after public health,¹⁹ and two stood in the front ranks as mayors.²⁰

Neither the Democratic nor the Republican party can claim a monopoly of city bosses. Of this particular score ten subscribed to the Democratic party consistently,²¹ and seven attached themselves to the Republican party.²² "Doc" Ames began and ended his mayoralty career as a Republican but served two terms in between as a Democrat. Although Edward Butler nominally professed to be a Democrat, he succeeded almost equally well whichever party happened to win at the polls. William Flinn remained a Republican during his career as boss but in 1912 left the ranks to join the Progressives. Altogether city bosses have not attached the same importance to national political parties that they have to their own ideas and desires. Tammany rulers ordinarily support nominally a national candidate who displeases them, but they do it so unenthusiastically that the backing does not amount to much. Edward Butler stands as the classic example of a bipartisan boss. Though a Republican, James McManes carried on open negotiations with the Philadelphia Democrats. "Old Boy" Cox, also a Republican, saw to it that the Democrats received a share of the patronage, and the Pittsburgh barons managed to keep their opponents in an amiable mood by throwing them a few scraps now and then.

¹⁵ Kelly, Croker, and Olvany.

¹⁶ McLaughlin, Behrman, and Roger Sullivan.

¹⁷ Tweed, Croker, Olvany, Flinn, Magee, and Behrman.

¹⁸ Tweed, McManes, Behrman, Murphy, and McLaughlin.

¹⁹ Ames and Lomasney.

²⁰ Ames and Behrman.

²¹ Tweed, Croker, Kelly, Murphy, Olvany, T. Sullivan, R. Sullivan, McLaughlin, Lomasney, and Behrman.

²² McManes, Durham, Vare, Magee, Lundin, Cox, and Ruef.

Strong organizations are usually a requisite for any considerable success in ruling a city. To secure public offices and patronage, elections must be won; and in order to win elections, well disciplined units of workers are essential. Eight of the twenty bosses under consideration built up excellent political machines,²³ nine established very good organizations,²⁴ two created fair ones,²⁵ while "Doc" Ames had a weak machine. With Butler and Ruef strong organizations held somewhat less importance, because Butler worked with both parties and Ruef depended on class prejudice to maintain his power rather than upon a political machine. "Doc" Ames, with his tottering derelict of an organization, shows how variable must be the fortunes of an overlord who lacks a strong organization, that is, unless fortune smiles sweetly.

A minority of city bosses have ruled from any high titular position in their political machines. Instead they have preferred to exercise their authority through less obtrusive channels. Although Charles F. Murphy held a satchemship in the Tammany Society, he served as plain district leader and member of the executive committee in the political organization. "Judge" Olvany followed a similar policy. McManes, Durham, and Vare all contented themselves with the modest role of ward leader. In contrast to these gentlemen "Doc" Ames and Martin Behrman wielded their sceptres as mayors, William Flinn presided over the city Republican executive committee of Pittsburgh for twenty years, and John Kelly acted as chairman of the Tammany executive committee. Both Kelly and Croker headed the Tammany finance committee. Of all the twenty leaders "Honorable"

²³ Murphy, Olvany, T. Sullivan, McManes, Vare, Flinn, Magee, and Cox.

²⁴ Tweed, Durham, Behrman, Lundin, Croker, Kelly, Lomasney, R. Sullivan, and McLaughlin.

²⁵ Butler and Ruef.

Tweed held the most prominent place in the public eye. Among other things he presided over the general committee of Tammany Hall and functioned as grand sachem of Tammany Society.

Bosses are sometimes hard masters, sometimes reasonable ones, and again they are easy to work with. They may be easy without and hard within or hard without and easy within. Eight of the twenty barons under study may be designated despots who ruled with an iron hand.²⁶ Another eight followed a medium policy,²⁷ and four won the reputation of being easy.²⁸ Richard Croker ruled as an autocrat, although he covered his harshness on occasion with a deceiving veneer of good nature. "Duke" Vare, on the other hand, presented a brusque exterior but because of a warm heart did not drive his followers as if they were slaves. "Old Boy" Cox, with a reputation of being an easy boss, often belied it. "Doc" Ames takes the prize for lack of discipline, although he could ill afford to pursue such a policy. He allowed his followers to do about as they pleased, while he lay in drunken stupor or basked in the public gaze. Chris Magee received and deserved the appellation "easy" and could well afford to maintain it as long as he had a Flinn to look after the discipline of the machine.

Whether a city overlord will make power, financial gain, or something else his chief aim in politics or whether he will combine several into a hybrid aim will depend upon his own character. Just as some business men engage in a scramble for gold and others seek power or prestige, so one boss seeks gain of one sort and another of quite a different kind. Several have repeatedly asserted that they have not made a

²⁶ Croker, Kelly, Murphy, McManes, Flinn, Cox, Ruef, and McLaughlin.

²⁷ Tweed, Olvany, Vare, T. Sullivan, Lundin, Lomasney, Behrman, and Roger Sullivan.

²⁸ Ames, Butler, Durham, and Magee.

dollar financially from their position as ruler, and others have claimed to spend out of their own pocket to feed a hungry machine. While such assertions may be entirely accurate in cases and while the majority do not profit directly from their positions, nevertheless, most of them probably do receive financial returns indirectly through contracts to their companies or through privileges granted to their pets. Lord Bryce credits James McManes with no financial gain from his domination over Philadelphia.²⁹ John Kelly seems to have possessed as much when he became boss as he did after fourteen years of leadership. However, Richard Croker admitted that he was working for his own pocket "all the time" and undoubtedly placed financial gain high before his eyes.³⁰ He had little or nothing in the way of property when he became boss and died a very wealthy man. Tweed, Tim Sullivan, Cox, Flinn, Butler, and Ruef certainly profited in no small way from their positions as bosses. On the other hand almost all city bosses prize the power that the position carries with it, and some have made that a chief aim. Murphy, Kelly, McManes, Lomasney, McLaughlin, Behrman, Lundin, Olvany, Vare, and possibly Magee appear to have placed power above all other returns. But "Doc" Ames aimed at the front page in the newspaper and the theatrical attention accorded a city boss.

City bosses receive somewhat informal appellations from the public and from constituents. All of the twenty under consideration could boast of at least one such cognomen, and some enjoyed several. Sometimes the name comes from a physical or mental characteristic, sometimes from a public office record, again from the abbreviating of a name or from an occupation, and sometimes the nickname is derived from

²⁹ *The American Commonwealth* (3 vols., London, 1888), III, 203.

³⁰ New York State Legislature, *Report of the Special Assembly Committee Appointed to Investigate the Public Offices and Departments of the City of New York* (5 vols., Albany, 1900), I, 353.

the boss's political position. Everyone called Timothy D. Sullivan "Big Tim" or "Big Feller" on account of bodily size. Fred Lundin designated himself a "Poor Swede" and also went by the names "Congressman," "Silent Boss," "Mystery Man of Chicago," and "Czar." St. Louisans spoke of Edward Butler as "Colonel," or "Ed," or "Old Man Butler." Ruef drew the name "Curly Boss" on account of elaborate curls and also frequently heard himself called "Abe." People called George B. Cox "Old Boy," Albert A. Ames "Doc," and Edwin H. Vare plain "Eddie," "Little Fellow," "Apostle to the Poor," or the "Duke of South Philadelphia." Tweed was popularly known as "Bill," "Boss," or "Honorable," Croker as "Dick," Durham as "Judge" or "Iz," Flinn as "Bill" or "Senator," Magee as "Chris," Behrman as "Martin," and R. Sullivan as "Roger." John Kelly liked to be called "Honest John," and Hugh McLaughlin preferred "The Grand Old Man of Brooklyn" to "Boss," "Duke," or "Old Man." Charles F. Murphy ordinarily answered to "Commissioner" from dock board days. George W. Olvany was spoken of as "Judge." Martin Michael Lomasney hears himself called "Czar," "Mahatma," or "The Gentleman from Ward Eight." James McManes was known as "King."

For periods of from less than five years to more than forty-one years the twenty bosses maintained themselves in power. Five of them, Olvany with four years and eight months to the day, Ruef with six years, Lundin and Durham with eight years each, and Tweed with nine years, reigned less than ten years. Seven ruled for periods of from ten to twenty years,³¹ and eight held their places for more than twenty years.³² Of these eight five maintained their power

³¹ Croker, Kelly, Vare, Magee, Roger Sullivan, T. Sullivan, and Ames.

³² Murphy, Lomasney, McManes, Cox, Butler, McLaughlin, Flinn, and Behrman.

for terms varying from twenty to thirty years.³³ James McManes rounded out a full third of a century. Martin Lomasney has already achieved approximately thirty-eight years and is still somewhat active. It remained to Hugh McLaughlin to establish a record for length of leadership. He held sway for forty-one years and came to be known as the "Grand Old Man of Brooklyn."

Death brought an end to the domination of nine of the twenty bosses under study, although Chris Magee and James McManes, on account of quarrels with state bosses, had suffered much and possibly could not have continued at the helm much longer if death had not cut them short of life.³⁴ "Judge" Durham and "Old Boy" Cox also had suffered serious reverses and without actual downfall had become somewhat quiescent in politics. However, Murphy, Roger Sullivan, Vare, and Behrman had never possessed greater authority than at their deaths. John Kelly's long illness tended to diminish his power, but he died in fair control of his Tammany braves. "Judge" Olvany resigned his position in Tammany Hall ostensibly because of illness, although jealousy on the part of the legal fraternity and opposition to the "new Tammany" apparently entered in. Lundin and Lomasney are fairly active at the present time.

The remaining barons came to their downfalls from causes so unlike that it is difficult to classify them. Richard Croker made the mistake of resigning under a bleak outlook for Tammany, apparently with the idea that no one else could fill the place and he could return when he chose. Of course "Commissioner" Murphy ensconced himself in the position and Croker remained in the cold. Although "Big Tim" Sullivan retained some power until he lost his sanity,

³³ Murphy, Cox, Flinn, Butler, and Behrman.

³⁴ Kelly, Murphy, McManes, Vare, Cox, Magee, R. Sullivan, Behrman, and Durham.

his political career closed chiefly on account of the death of relatives who had manned his organization, the lean pickings available to Tammany after 1905, and the displacement of the Irish of the Bowery by Hebrews. Hugh McLaughlin represented an obstacle in the path of the realization of a dream entertained by "Commissioner" Murphy—the expansion of Tammany control in important matters over all of New York City. When McLaughlin refused to give way or compromise, Tammany incited a revolt that finally led to the "Grand Old Man's" defeat.

"Greedy underlings" brought ruin to Butler, Ames, and Tweed. The minions of Butler in the city council of St. Louis became so avaricious that they threw off all constraint and offered privileges to the highest bidder. One such deal happened to be blocked by injunction proceedings brought by citizens before the bribe money had been distributed. The howl raised by the councilmen reached the ears of the prosecuting attorney, and the disclosures resulting implicated the "Colonel." Nevertheless, to show his mettle he dictated quite as completely in the election following his trial as he had before, although the disaster broke his spirit and he soon retired from politics. Followers of "Doc" Ames went to all sorts of excesses that might have passed unchallenged had it not been for a valiant grand jury foreman who took up the battle and broke the régime. "Honorable" Tweed met trouble in the person of James O'Brien, sometime sheriff and always mal-content, who had unpaid claims of a very questionable nature against the county of New York. To avenge himself O'Brien inducted a spy into the auditor's office to secure information in regard to the peculation carried on by Tweed and his ring.

Out in Cincinnati "Old Boy" Cox encountered a group of young lawyers led by Prosecuting Attorney Hunt. In

spite of the fact that their efforts to convict him proved abortive, the tilt broke his spirit and he soon relinquished much of his political control and shortly thereafter died. By ousting a director of public works, who refused to fix paving specifications in Pittsburgh in favor of his company, William Flinn so aroused the ire of the man's influential brother that he waged war until he became boss of Pittsburgh in Flinn's stead.

Abe Ruef found himself caught in a fight made by the Spreckels' family against the street railway company and the Southern Pacific Railroad political machine and came to his political death. "Poor Swede" Lundin drove State's Attorney Crowe to revolt in a quarrel between the Attorney and Chief of Police Fitzmorris. Whereupon Crowe joined Attorney General Brundage, leader of a rival Republican faction, and began investigations that led to an indictment of Lundin for conspiracy to defraud the board of education. Mr. Lundin won a verdict of "not guilty" from the trial jury, but he discovered that Crowe had largely taken over his mantle as boss. "Iz" Durham received the blame for an attempt to lease the Philadelphia gas works at terms unfavorable to the public, became defendant in a suit brought by Philadelphia to recover about five million dollars alleged to have been illegally retained in the construction of the Torresdale water filtration plant, and after severe defeats at the polls fell ill and soon died.

To sum up, it may be said that natural causes entered into the closing of the political careers of thirteen of the twenty barons, sometimes in the form of death and again in the form of illness and old age.³⁵ Disloyalty within their own ranks partially or entirely accounts for the downfall of four

³⁵ Kelly, Murphy, T. Sullivan, McLaughlin, McManes, Durham, Vare, Cox, Magee, Roger Sullivan, Butler, Behrman, and Olvany.

bosses,³⁶ while fights with other bosses assisted in the disasters of eight of the score.³⁷

Reform movements do not seem to play much of a part in breaking city bosses, in spite of the fact that such movements have dogged the footsteps of almost all of them. In seven cases reformers have been able to get in a few telling blows but in no case have they been entirely responsible for a knockout.³⁸ The victory of Seth Low played a secondary part in the resignation of Richard Croker. The Committee of Seventy rated a more important part in the ruin of "Judge" Durham. The reform movement which raged around William Flinn was actually directed by the one who succeeded him as boss. Butler, Cox, Ruef, and Ames have been spoken of as victims of reform. They all became involved in legal proceedings of a criminal character. A very liberal definition of reform might include their cases. But back of reform in each case some other factor really stood preëminent.

In spite of the strenuous duties of a city boss most of them live to fair ages. The average age attained by the sixteen of the twenty barons not now living amounted to 64.4 years. The four with the longest leaderships all lived to ripe ages. As a matter of record Hugh McLaughlin with the longest political career tied with Richard Croker for the most advanced age. McLaughlin reached an age of seventy-eight years, James McManes an age of seventy-seven years, and "Colonel" Butler lived for at least seventy-three years and possibly attained an age of eighty-one years, depending on the year of the "big wind" in Ireland which was his birth year. Of the five bosses who ruled ten years or less Tweed reached the most advanced age, fifty-five years, Dur-

³⁶ Ames, Butler, McLaughlin, and Kelly.

³⁷ Tweed, McLaughlin, McManes, Durham, Cox, Flinn, Magee, and Lundin.

³⁸ Croker, Durham, Cox, Flinn, Butler, Ruef, and Ames.

ham dropped off at fifty-two years, and Olvany, Lundin, and Ruef still live. It does not appear then that the work involved necessarily causes premature death, although on occasion it probably has. "Big Tim" Sullivan died at the least age of all, being only a scant fifty years. Five died in their fifties,³⁹ six in their sixties,⁴⁰ and five passed away in their seventies.⁴¹ Four are now living,⁴² and two engage in the "great game of politics."⁴³

It cannot be fairly said that all city bosses are interested only in those measures that benefit themselves, although, of course, many are. Over against Tweed, Croker, Cox, Butler, or Tim Sullivan, all of whom reveal narrow partisan interests, stand Lomasney, Roger Sullivan, Kelly, Vare, and Magee who should receive credit for important reforms. Gifford Pinchot once remarked that Vare always stood "on the side of human rights as contrasted with property rights."⁴⁴ The Illinois constitutional convention voted a resolution ascribing to Roger Sullivan many of the significant reforms of a decade.⁴⁵ "Commissioner" Murphy prided himself on taking the police out of politics. "Poor Swede" Lundin devoted himself to an old-age pension scheme and to tax reform, Chris Magee sponsored a free library system for every city and borough of Pennsylvania, Martin Lomasney must receive credit for the sectarian aid prohibition of the Massachusetts constitutional convention of 1917, and John Kelly fought for a homestead act in Congress and reduced the public debt of New York City by about twelve million dollars. Martin Behrman worked with all his might for

³⁹ Tweed, T. Sullivan, Magee, Roger Sullivan, and Durham.

⁴⁰ Kelly, Murphy, Vare, Cox, Ames, and Behrman.

⁴¹ Croker, McLaughlin, McManes, Flinn, and Butler.

⁴² Olvany, Ruef, Lundin, and Lomasney.

⁴³ Lomasney and Lundin.

⁴⁴ *Legislative Journal of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 1923* (Harrisburg, 1923), I, 1329.

⁴⁵ *Chicago Tribune*, April 16, 1920, 5:8.

good roads, playgrounds, flood-control, parks, and an improved water system. Seven of the bosses saw no farther than the ends of their own noses.⁴⁶ Seven are to be classed as ordinarily partisan, although they sometimes favored important reforms.⁴⁷ Six threw their support to progressive measures on frequent occasions.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Ruef, Ames, Butler, Cox, T. Sullivan, Croker, and Tweed.

⁴⁷ McLaughlin, Kelly, Olvany, McManes, Durham, Murphy, and Lundin.

⁴⁸ Lomasney, Vare, Magee, Roger Sullivan, Behrman, and Flinn.

CHAPTER VII

IS THERE A "TYPICAL" BOSS?

Newspaper artists have been fond of portraying municipal bosses in much the same generalized fashion employed by many persons in viewing members of another race. Accordingly, their bosses quite frequently fit without difficulty into the same physical or mental mold. Moreover, not a few writers have conjured up a "type" which supposedly represents any one of the legion of city rulers. Thus, one describes any Brooklyn boss of forty years ago as a "bull-necked, two-fisted male of primitive power, who wore loud checks and a derby hat; smoked, and rarely removed, a portentous cigar, and invariably from the side of his mouth emitted hoarse, staccato orders."¹ Within the last few years, however, several works have appeared to discount any striking similarity of bosses in physique, mentality, or in circumstance.² William B. Munro of Harvard goes so far as to declare that "apart from courage, persistence, and a 'flair for politics' there is no one quality that all bosses possess."³

An analytical study of twenty well-known municipal overlords reveals several physical and mental characteristics as well as circumstances that seem to attend bosses more frequently than they do the rank and file of humans. But only a very few qualities or circumstances that can be attached to all of the score of bosses have presented themselves. Although every one of the twenty rulers came to the leadership after more or less long and a somewhat grilling ap-

¹ Benjamin R. C. Low, *Seth Low* (New York, 1925), p. 47.

² See William B. Munro, *Personality in Politics* (New York, 1924), *passim*; Robert C. Brooks, *Political Parties and Electoral Problems* (New York, 1923), pp. 190-198; and Charles E. Merriam in H. F. Gosnell's *Boss Platt and His New York Machine* (Chicago, 1924), xiii-xxiv.

³ *Personality in Politics*, p. 58.

prenticeship, which required the expenditure of great amounts of energy, nevertheless, luck helped some along who for lack of persistence would scarcely have got there otherwise, and some made up by mental strategy for a lack in bodily development. After reaching the top, it may be pointed out that variable fortunes brought at least some defeat as well as victory in every case, but the ratio of success and failure in the several careers varies widely. Perhaps the most important common circumstance that has been noted is that every one of the score resided in the city over which he later dominated before his twentieth year and usually very much earlier.⁴ In spite of the fact that the "great game of politics" has really interested most if not all city barons, it has fascinated some and only mildly attracted others. C. L. Magee of Pittsburgh, for example, developed a passion for politics that enabled him to work incessantly without great fatigue or effort. Dick Croker continually complained of the hard work involved and displayed a bored attitude which seems to indicate that his interest at times registered very slightly. All of the twenty leaders possessed one or several indefinable qualities that caused them to receive nicknames from constituents and sometimes from the public at large. It seems doubtful whether the quality was the same in every instance, for the names themselves indicate several bases. By no means all of the bosses were jolly, good fellows or even approachable.

Among traits possessed by many city bosses may be mentioned generosity to the poor, loyalty to obedient henchmen, reasonable emphasis on high standards of personal morals, and interest in religion. A large proportion labored with persistence, displayed more than ordinary courage, and possessed intensely practical minds. Most of the twenty were

⁴George Brennan, late Democratic boss of Chicago, is an exception. He was thirty-two years of age when he reached Chicago.

native-born Americans but had foreign-born fathers and mothers, were urban rather than rural products, came from families poor in worldly goods, and found it necessary as mere children to assume a burden as breadwinner because of the premature death of a father or because of his general shiftlessness. They usually enjoyed slight formal educations but found time for avocations of one kind or another. Most of them had wives and children to whom they were reasonably devoted, made more or less use of relatives in politics, and lived to a respectable old age. With very few exceptions they resided in their respective baronies from childhood years, entered politics as soon as they reached legal age, and became active in ward or district politics before they achieved the leadership. Having reached the top few held a high titular office in the organization. With one exception all held at least one public office and a majority have long records of office-holding attached to their names. Most of them were periodically bothered with reform movements of various kinds. However, these movements had little to do with their overthrow if they were unfortunate enough to lose control. They usually belonged to several social and fraternal organizations, proved to be above the average in handling followers, and often successfully forecast popular reaction. They tended to be large in body, great in strength of muscles, and well able to take care of themselves. A more than normal proportion amassed sizable although not huge fortunes, closely and frequently openly allied themselves with powerful corporate interests, and proved themselves strong executives in business as well as in politics. But in all the above cases sufficient exceptions can be found to make it dangerous to say that they are common to city bosses. For example, William M. Tweed, whatever else he may have lacked, displayed admirable courage, but Abraham Ruef showed the white feather repeatedly. Again while Charles F. Murphy

stood for persistence in about as strong an essence as can be found, Richard Croker thrice resigned in time of reverse and altogether lacked in staying qualities.

A consideration of twenty city bosses does not bolster up the theory of the "typical" boss. One would have a difficult time identifying any appreciable number of them were he to go forth into the highways and byways with any single preconception. The classic description of the derby-hatted, sport-suited, flashy-jewelried, plug-ugly boss, with coarse, brutal features, protruding paunch, and well-chewed stogy, who has no morals and is socially impossible, is about as accurate as most of the other "typical" portrayals. Political bosses are not a distinct species of human beings but possess the physical, mental, and moral variations of men in general.

PART II

CHAPTER I

"CZAR" MARTIN LOMASNEY

Boston has given birth to a sizable band of powerful ward and local leaders who have warred so vigorously and yet survived so stubbornly as to render impossible the emergence of a single all-powerful boss. Among these lesser lights Martin Michael Lomasney, "Czar" of old Ward Eight now and for the past thirty years, holds the unchallenged record for length of service, picturesque character, and genuine native ability.

Mr. Lomasney claims Boston as native city in spite of persistent rumors to the effect that Nova Scotia deserves that honor. The doubt as to his birthplace arises from the absence of record in parish or public archives of Boston. However, Mr. Lomasney has never taken out naturalization papers, has repeatedly insisted that he was born in Boston down on South Margin Street, and states that he has a birth certificate and a baptismal record bearing out his claim.¹ Whichever place actually gave him birth, he was living in the city of Boston within a very few years after December 3, 1859, the date of his nativity. Maurice Lomasney, his father, born in Fermoy, Cork County, Ireland, apparently sprang from good although poor stock, emigrated to America in the forties, set up in the tailoring business, and died from sunstroke about 1870. Mary Murray, Mr. Lomasney's mother, was born in Lismore, Waterford County, Ireland.² The Lomasneys had four sons, two of whom died even before the premature deaths of their parents. The two surviv-

¹ Rumors in regard to the Nova Scotia claim are to be picked up from a good many Boston politicians. For Lomasney's claim, see "Martin Lomasney, The Story of His Life as Related by Him to Thomas Carens," *Boston Herald*, December 5, 1925, 1:5.

² See the *Boston Herald*, December 5, 1925, 1:5, and the *Boston Globe*, December 2, 1923, for additional information.

ing boys, Martin and Joseph, left without means, lived with an aunt and made their living as best they could.

After a public school education, limited to the grades below the eighth at the Mayhew School, Martin Lomasney left school because he "didn't learn much." When about ten years old he became a street urchin, organized a gang which later proved useful politically, and earned a sort of living by selling newspapers and blacking boots.³ When he attained sufficient stature, he obtained a job "smashing" baggage at the Lowell, Fitchburg, and Eastern Railroad depot and later became an apprentice at metal spinning. His first public job materialized in 1877 through the influence of one Michael Wells, for whom Lomasney had collected votes, when in connection with the extension of Massachusetts Avenue, he worked as common laborer with pick and shovel at \$1.75 for ten hours. Somewhat later a more desirable job as lighter and extinguisher of street lamps opened through the same instrumentality. From 1884 to 1892 Mr. Lomasney served as inspector for the board of health under City Physician Durgin. He apparently did his work acceptably, for in 1892 he left the place against the wish of his supervisor.⁴

Early active in politics Lomasney became involved with the law in 1884 as a tool of certain political worthies, and subsequently a grand jury indictment charged him with a plot to murder. Fortunately for him, District Attorney Stevens looked with somewhat sympathetic eye on the case and refused to bring it to trial. During these years Mr. Lomasney, using his gang as a lever, ascended the political ladder gradually, moving from precinct worker to precinct

³ See "Martin Lomasney, The Story of His Life," *Boston Herald*, December 5, 1925, 1:5; *Boston Globe*, November 14, 1905; and *Boston Globe*, December 2, 1923.

⁴ *Boston Advertiser*, April 30, 1914. See also *Debates in the Massachusetts Constitutional Convention* (4 vols., Boston, 1917-1919), III, 440.

leader, and finally in the middle eighties emerged as an influential figure in Ward Eight. He sent his brother, Joseph, to the common council in 1888 and to the lower house of the general court in 1889 and 1890. By the time he took a seat for himself in the board of aldermen in 1892, he had established a hold over Ward Eight beyond serious danger of break.⁵

The board of alderman proved a likely field for Lomasney. During the sessions of 1893 he served as chairman of nine committees, held membership on nineteen other committees, occupied a prominent place in providing a memorial for Bishop Phillips Brooks, and altogether took a part in the proceedings on the floor and in committee-room second to none.⁶ In 1895, as chairman of six committees, he introduced twenty-three measures which dealt with electric lights, sewers, repairs, increases of salaries, and granting of permits.⁷ When the mayor opposed the annual Fourth of July celebration given by the city, Mr. Lomasney waxed especially eloquent and said: "It seems to me that every tub should stand on its own bottom. . . . I don't care anything about this cheap loaf of economy. I never saw a man in my life who made economy his watchword who was not always defeated before the people. . . . I would sooner vote any day to increase a salary than to cut it down. . . . The men who live are those who look out for the people, and when the people receive the benefits, they never grumble about taxes."⁸ Nevertheless, when a proposal to care for current expenses by issuing bonds came before the council, Mr. Lomasney urged, "that current expenses should be met by taxation, the

⁵ See *Boston Globe*, November 3, 1924; *Boston Herald*, March 10, 1909; and *Boston Globe*, July 8, 1910.

⁶ *Reports of the Proceedings of the City Council of Boston, 1893* (Boston, 1894), pp. 46, 47, 78.

⁷ *Reports of the Proceedings of the City Council of Boston, 1895* (Boston, 1896), pp. 61, 126, 231, 372, 436, 773, 990.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 310.

same as a person would do with his own private affairs.”⁹ He found time to hit at political assessments on office-holders and designated such a practice as “peanut politics.”¹⁰ But above all Lomasney watched the interests of his own ward. When the board seemed to favor placing an embalmed whale on exhibition there, he opposed strenuously and asked: “I wonder if that property was on Beacon Street, whether they would take the same view? Why should we have inflicted on us a whale, Mr. Chairman, when the whaling grounds have been cleaned out long ago?”¹¹

When the “Mahatma” of Ward Eight stepped into the senate of the commonwealth of Massachusetts to represent the Third Suffolk District, he manifested the same vigorous interest that had marked him in the board of aldermen of Boston. Serving on the committees on engrossed bills, constitutional amendments, and manufactures, as well as on a special committee to canvass the returns of the votes in the election of 1895, he reported for his committees at times, made frequent amendments to measures under consideration, and interested himself chiefly in election bills and park appropriations for Boston.¹²

After a second term in the Massachusetts senate in 1897 Mr. Lomasney took up an almost continuous residence in the lower house of the general court, serving twelve terms during the years 1899 to 1917. Although the Republicans ordinarily greatly outnumbered the Democrats, nevertheless, “Czar” Martin made a mark on the legislative work of two decades scarcely matched by any member of the dominant party. In an address before the Worcester City Republican Committee Allen T. Treadway, president of the Massa-

⁹ *Reports of the Proceedings of the City Council of Boston, 1895* (Boston, 1896), p. 453.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 957.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 518.

¹² *Journal of the Senate of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 1896* (Boston, 1896), pp. 16, 24, 25, 27, 589, 800, 804, 860, 866.

chusetts senate, said, "I respect as a powerful political leader Martin M. Lomasney. He holds his party solid for the measures which the party wishes to enact. I wish that we had a similar leader with Republican ideas to work for our party. . . . Although exceeding the Democrats in numbers in both branches, we are not actually in control."¹³ During the sessions subsequent to 1905 Mr. Lomasney received consideration for the post of speaker and during the years 1911-1917 generally commanded the Democratic caucus support for that place. However, due to Republican majorities he always met defeat and had to content himself with the minority leadership.¹⁴

Even the newspapers of Boston ordinarily admitted that the "Czar" had a roll-call record rarely excelled.¹⁵ Perhaps that is not strange in the light of the explanation that he gave some years later as to his philosophy of office. He said, "I am an old Jackson Democrat when I am talking to the crowd before election, but when you take your oath of office and swear to administer your office according to the constitution and the laws, you are in a different position."¹⁶ Although he opposed woman suffrage, public ownership, and prohibition, he supported legislation providing an eight-hour day for public employees, the direct primary, a modification of the general property tax, taxation of legacies, recognition of organized labor, and equal salaries for men and women teachers in the Boston public schools as well as legislation prohibiting appropriations to sectarian and private institutions and political contributions from corporations.¹⁷ When

¹³ *Worcester Gazette*, April 11, 1911.

¹⁴ In 1917 Mr. Lomasney received 59 out of 227 votes.

¹⁵ See *Boston Post*, October 25, 1921, and *Boston American*, April 16, 1911.

¹⁶ *Debates in the Massachusetts Constitutional Convention*, III, 1077.

¹⁷ *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 1905* (Boston, 1905), pp. 864, 1023, 750. See also *ibid.*, 1917 (Boston, 1917), pp. 143, 222, 401, 762, 763, 820, 821, 1037, 1082,

he finally surrendered his seat in the legislature, he held membership and a ranking place on two very important committees: ways and means, and metropolitan affairs.

Nominally a real estate dealer after retirement from the Boston board of health, "Czar" Martin has actually devoted most of his time and energy to politics. In 1884 he organized the Hendricks Club, named for Vice-President Thomas A. Hendricks because of his friendship for the Irish, which has continued as the mainspring of his political organization all through the years. His political lieutenants hold prominent places in the club and loyal followers to the number of some two hundred and fifty are members.¹⁸ The "Mahatma" has his office, the door of which bears the legend "Real Estate," in the same building and on the same floor on which Donovan Hall and the Hendricks Club rooms are located. In addition to the Hendricks Club he has had a ward executive committee, a special Jewish committee, and a larger general committee. Altogether the registration of Ward Five (old Ward Eight) totalled 7,024 in the state election of 1921.¹⁹ Since 1925 the ward bears the number "three." Of course, Mr. Lomasney commands a following in other wards of the city which varies from time to time.²⁰

With office hours from 9 A. M. to 1 A. M. Martin Lomasney seldom removes his eye from the affairs of the ward. Nevertheless, in 1905 he found time to tour Europe and the next year purchased a summer place at Concord where he took some time away from politics to raise fancy sheep. During recent years he has left his home of many years in the heart of the ward to live with brother Joe in the Back Bay. On the whole few bosses have so constantly and "Martin Lomasney, The Story of His Life," *Boston Herald*, December 23, 1925, p. 7.

¹⁸ *Boston Transcript*, December 12, 1921, and *Boston Globe*, March 11, 1919, and October 14, 1919.

¹⁹ *Boston Globe*, December 12, 1921.

²⁰ See the *Boston Transcript*, September 8, 1920, for an estimate.

lived on the "job." Rather than spread over state and national political areas he has preferred to center on local politics. Even as a member of the general court he has remained almost within an easy stone's throw from the heart of his bailiwick, for the State House stands on its fringes.

In 1892 Mr. Lomasney first became interested in national politics and supported the candidacy of David B. Hill for president. Four years later he sat for the first time as a delegate in a national convention and as an advocate of "gold" exerted little influence in the face of William Jennings Bryan and his "Cross of Gold." Again in 1916 he went to the national convention as a delegate with the hope of swinging it to endorse Irish independence but had slight success. However, in the 1920 convention, which he attended in an unofficial capacity, he succeeded in getting 402½ votes for his Irish freedom plank.²¹

Because brother Joe as nominee to the position of health commissioner received rejection at the hands of the Massachusetts civil service commission in 1910, Mr. Lomasney informed the commissioners in a personal interview that he would elect a Democratic governor and cause them to be removed. He, therefore, fixed on E. N. Foss as a likely candidate and elected him governor in 1911. The next year he again supported Foss and aided in his reelection. In 1913 the "Czar" announced himself for David I. Walsh, at present United States Senator, and claims most of the credit for electing him governor. Mr. Lomasney has also held membership on the state committee of the Democratic party at various times. Since 1915 he has been more or less quiescent in state politics.²²

²¹ "Martin Lomasney, The Story of His Life," *Boston Herald*, December 22, 1925, p. 9.

²² *Boston Globe*, March 10, 1919. See also "Martin Lomasney, The Story of His Life," *Boston Herald*, December 18, 1925, p. 18, and December 19, 1925, p. 22.

Although now well along in years Mr. Lomasney commands attention when he appears on the scene. Medium in height, large-boned, and substantially built, his very presence carries with it an atmosphere of aggressiveness. A bald pate, glittering black eyes, swarthy skin, and an unusually massive jaw mark the man. Altogether he is excessively nervous in makeup, and while he possesses a good voice, he talks so rapidly and gesticulates so eloquently that one might imagine he were an Italian. In his hour and a half Sunday afternoon discourses before the Hendricks Club the "Czar" cannot get well under way until collar and coat have been stripped off and he stands in suspenders and shirt sleeves. His dress warrants the designation "picturesque." Indoors he generally wears a tattered straw hat irrespective of the season, and even in the Congressional hearings in the *Tague v. Fitzgerald* election contest he appeared to testify in an old sweater.²³ The "Mahatma" once remarked, "I never wore a dress suit in my life. I'm proud of that because there are more fakirs around in dress suits than you could shake a stick at."²⁴

Conversant with parliamentary law, "Czar" Martin greatly enjoys a battle with words and appears at his best when he participates in such a contest in the role of watch dog of the public welfare. The words uttered in the constitutional convention, "Do not change the old Constitution unless there are sound, valid, and substantial reasons for the change," represent his position exceptionally well.²⁵ Resembling a seasoned Spartan elder, he scorns both appearances and the softening influences in life. "No automobile, no fancy stuff for me, thank God," he declares and lives a life

²³ See *Boston Post*, November 6, 1922; *Boston Globe*, September 6, 1920; and *Boston Traveler*, November 3, 1924.

²⁴ *Boston Traveler*, November 3, 1924.

²⁵ *Debates in the Massachusetts Constitutional Convention*, I, 300.

of simplicity itself.²⁶ Thrifty to the core, intensely practical in mind, frank and brusque until it hurts, and eternally pugnacious, he knows nothing less than a fourteen-hour day of labor. Robert A. Woods, late of the Boston South End House, testified that "he has no tendencies toward any sort of dissipation, abstaining from liquor and even from tobacco" and hence discredited the stories that may be picked up in certain political circles of Boston to the effect that Lomasney made periodic trips to Cincinnati for a questionable purpose.²⁷ Mr. Lomasney's regularity is attested by his luncheon menu which invariably reads, "chicken broth, apple sauce, crackers, and tea."²⁸

Peter Tague, the "Czar's" evil genius, once claimed that Mr. Lomasney possessed enough wealth to make him a millionaire. The "Mahatma" replied, "I've got what I've saved through years of hard work," and denied the accusation.²⁹ The real estate business has undoubtedly proved profitable, and it seems likely that the report of the Boston Good Government Association, "supposed to have considerable means," represents his material goods conservatively enough.³⁰ In 1922 the "Czar" set the money received from the public treasury at \$29,000 all told.³¹ This apparently represents salary only, for it could scarcely include the \$27,382 paid by the city of Boston for 20 Pleasant Street.³² Evidence in the *Tague v. Fitzgerald* election case tended to show that he held stock in several trust companies, had a

²⁶ *Boston Globe*, December 12, 1921.

²⁷ *Boston Record*, January 1, 1914.

²⁸ "Martin Lomasney, The Story of His Life," *Boston Herald*, December 3, 1925, 1:2.

²⁹ *Boston Traveler*, November 3, 1924; *Boston Globe*, September 6, 1920.

³⁰ Available through the courtesy of Mr. George M. McCaffrey of the Boston Good Government Association.

³¹ *Boston Herald*, September 11, 1922.

³² *Boston Transcript*, February 28, 1913.

lease on a quarry, and acted as partner in the Beatty Construction Company.³³

Recreation, hobbies, and domestic affairs have drawn slight attention from Mr. Lomasney. He has kept free from entangling alliances, declaring that "politics and marriage do not go together."³⁴ Once he became interested in sheep and again for a time owned and drove a horse. At the Democratic outing in 1911 he played "catcher" on the baseball nine.³⁵ Nevertheless, with these few exceptions politics has been vocation, avocation, and family.

Thrift comes in for emphasis in the "Czar's" addresses to his constituents, although he once said that he "would sooner vote any day to increase a salary than to cut it down."³⁶ Notwithstanding this preachment and his own personal sense of thrift, he gives generously to the poor and derelict. Groups of from twenty-five to fifty men gathered for many years at his office door as the mid-night hour approached and each received a ticket good for a night's lodging. Serving for many years on the district social service committee of the Elizabeth Peabody House, he so won the regard of Eva Whiting, its superintendent, that she testified that by his readiness to help and generosity to the needy he had so endeared himself to the poor that they naturally followed his lead in politics.³⁷ He secured a library for his people and kept them reasonably free from the worst kind of "joints." In an address delivered to the Hendricks Club as late as 1921 Mr. Lomasney pointed with pride to the failure of "Lincoln Steffens, paid by the rich to search for

³³ *Boston Post*, March 11, 1919; *Boston Herald*, April 23, 1919.

³⁴ "Martin Lomasney, The Story of His Life," *Boston Herald*, December 3, 1925, 1:2.

³⁵ *Boston American*, September 22, 1911.

³⁶ *Reports of the Proceedings of the City Council of Boston, 1895*, p. 310.

³⁷ *Boston Globe*, March 20, 1914.

corruption," to connect him "with any brothels."³⁸ An opponent, James A. Gallivan, defended Mr. Lomasney on the floor of the House of Representatives of the United States in 1919 in the following words, "God knows I owe the distinguished leader of Ward Five little. I would have been mayor of Boston if he had been with me. Somebody wanted to know what does he do. He does good eighteen working hours of the day. Every child, every man in his district who has ever seen want, who has needed help had to make but one appeal to Lomasney."³⁹

Robert A. Woods, Lomasney's most able critic, admired the "Czar" for devotion to church which happened to be St. Joseph's Roman Catholic of the West End. What impressed him above even the "punctilious devotion" of the man was his custom to "seek an obscure corner, not the foremost seat."⁴⁰ Mr. Lomasney not only attended and supported his church but also defended it most faithfully in state legislature and constitutional convention.

Lacking sons to aid in the political game, Mr. Lomasney has made use of a brother, Joseph P. Lomasney, and a cousin, Daniel J. Kiley. Joe Lomasney, whom everyone recognizes as an aide of his brother, has held many public offices as well as an important position in the Hendricks Club. He served on the common council of Boston in 1888, in the state legislature 1889-1890, as city architect 1891, as superintendent of meter inspection in the Boston water department 1896-1898, in the legislature again in 1900-1901, as superintendent of bridges 1902-1904, in the state senate 1909-1911, on the Boston board of health 1910, and as school house commissioner 1913-1918. Dan Kiley, some-

³⁸ *Boston Transcript*, December 12, 1921.

³⁹ *Boston Globe*, October 24, 1919.

⁴⁰ *Boston Record*, January 1, 1914.

time president of the common council and congressman for many years acted as the chief lieutenant of the "Czar."

As a desert patriarch according to sentimental tradition guides the destinies of his nomads, so Mr. Lomasney rules his ward. Knowing most of the people personally, he ministers to them in such a way that they in turn rely on him in more spheres than politics alone. No one could call him a "hard master," for in spite of violent and sudden gusts of anger he conducts himself according to the axiom, "While the light holds out to burn, the humblest sinner may return."⁴¹ When he stands before the Hebrews, Irish, and Italians who throng Donovan Hall on Sunday afternoons, he talks to them not as a mere politician but rather as a father. Instead of political harangue he quite frequently declares himself on the evil of drink or the value of thrift. Indeed no one ordinarily knows which candidates he intends to support until the word goes forth on the very Sunday before election day.

The records of the Massachusetts constitutional convention of 1917 indicate the activity and the strength of the man. After the convention had adjourned, Samuel W. McCall, war governor of the commonwealth, is reported to have named Mr. Lomasney as one of two delegates who stood out above all the rest in constructive work.⁴² He held places on the committee charged with considering a bill of rights and on a special committee appointed to deal with problems arising out of the war. His best work seems to have been performed in discussion on the floor of the convention. In the debate on the question of grants to sectarian and private institutions he took a very prominent part and without doubt

⁴¹ These are Mr. Lomasney's own words. See *Boston Post*, March 12, 1919.

⁴² *Boston Record*, October 24, 1919.

had much to do with the inclusion of a prohibitory provision. On the whole he stood with the conservatives and opposed those who favored a less than unanimous jury verdict or a reorganization of the executive and administrative departments of the government. However, he voted for a budget system, declared for an untrammelled press, sought to have the legislature prohibited from passing bond issues except by a two-thirds vote, and above all fought to retain a simple and concise constitution.⁴³ No delegate provided the sessions with quite the merriment that Mr. Lomasney did. His frequent sharp remarks generally brought down roars of laughter.

Every political boss knows more or less about defeat before he has gone far along his way. Mr. Lomasney, of course, is no exception, although he has enjoyed considerable success in the affairs of his ward for more than thirty years, having been elected to office twenty-two times, served in a public capacity twenty-five out of thirty-three years, and met no defeat when a candidate for office himself. In 1898 he encountered a set-back after spectacularly using ferries, hacks, tugs, and sprinters in a mad race against twelve minutes to carry certificates of nomination from a convention held across the harbor in East Boston to the court house, because the election commission threw his candidates off the ballot.⁴⁴ One of his worst, if not the worst defeat, came in 1905 when Mr. Lomasney supported E. J. Donovan for mayor against John F. Fitzgerald who won the election. The "Czar" has characterized this as the "lowest position in his career."⁴⁵ For years thereafter he busied himself in revenge against certain henchmen who proved traitors in this cam-

⁴³ See *Debates in the Massachusetts Constitutional Convention*, I, 87, 176, 292, 353, 378; II, 820; III, 1074, 1205; and IV, 163.

⁴⁴ See the *Boston Herald*, October 21, 1898, 1:4, 5, 6 and 4:3, 4, 5, 6.

⁴⁵ "Martin Lomasney, The Story of His Life," *Boston Herald*, December 15, 1925, p. 11.

paign. In 1907 Mr. Lomasney made peace with Mayor Fitzgerald and aided in a campaign for re-election, but the Republicans succeeded in electing G. A. Hibbard. In 1910 he helped elect Fitzgerald and in 1914 supported him again. On account of illness Fitzgerald withdrew from the race at the last minute, and J. M. Curley edged in as mayor in the latter year. In 1917 the "Czar" favored Andrew J. Peters, the Good Government Association candidate for mayor, and should receive some credit for his election. In 1915 the city council dealt the "Czar" a blow by changing ward lines and naming famous old Ward Eight "Ward Five." In 1925 the council took away his ward again and gave in return Ward Three. Another bitter pill has been Peter Tague whom Mr. Lomasney sent to Congress in 1914. In 1918 Tague desired to continue his congressional career even though his mentor decided that John F. Fitzgerald should have the seat. Tague finally ran irrespective of the "Czar's" wishes and on the face of the returns lost the election. Nevertheless, not at all daunted he contested the election and got himself seated by the House of Representatives. Mr. Lomasney appeared at the election hearings, directed the defense personally, and altogether gave more side-lights on himself than he had in all the long years before. Peter Tague testified that Lomasney had ordered him to take a pacifist stand in the war and when the war broke to obtain certain contracts.⁴⁶ But what hurt the "Czar" most was the majority report of the committee on elections of the House of Representatives which said among other things, "Martin M. Lomasney is the political boss of the Fifth Ward. . . . He is nominally a Democrat," . . . When it suits his personal ends, he has no hesitancy in wielding his power to encompass the defeat of Democratic

⁴⁶ *Boston Transcript*, March 12, 1919. See also *Boston Post*, March 13, 1919; *Boston Globe*, October 24, 1919; and *Boston Transcript*, November 2, 1920.

candidates." "His performance during the hearing presents a curious admixture of ignorance and independence." "He has built up his power through a number of years largely by means of the fraudulent votes of the liquor dealers, bartenders, and city job-holders illegally registered in his ward and the returns of alleged residents in the cheap lodging houses."⁴⁷

Not only did "Czar" Martin lose out in 1918 but again in 1920 and still again in 1922 when Peter Tague sought election. However, in 1924 he finally downed Tague and elected J. J. Douglas. Another defeat came to Mr. Lomasney in the second mayoralty election of James M. Curley, when he supported John R. Murphy. Mr. Lomasney's feeling against Curley has been quite bitter in recent years. In 1925 Joseph H. O'Neil, Lomasney's mayoralty candidate, went down to defeat before M. E. Nichols, the Republican aspirant. To the surprise of many, Lomasney, on the Sunday before the election of 1929, announced himself for his old enemy, James M. Curley, again a candidate for the office of mayor. Curley was victorious.

No better explanation of his success in politics has come to light than one given by himself in 1923. Mr. Lomasney explained it thus: "Is somebody out of a job? We do our best to place him and not necessarily on the public payroll. Does the family run in arrears with the landlord or the butcher? Then we lend a helping hand. Do the kids need shoes or clothing, or the mother a doctor? We do what we can, and since as the world is run, such things must be done, we keep old friends and make new ones."⁴⁸ Many years earlier he offered a similar reason when he said, "They (Irish, Hebrew, and Italian residents of the ward) are just

⁴⁷ *Boston Globe*, October 14, 1919, and *Boston Transcript*, October 14, 1919.

⁴⁸ *Boston Globe*, December 2, 1923.

my friends. I am right here with them all the time, and that's what counts. When you live with people 365 days in the year, they get to know you and trust you. . . . Why here's Jerry. He works in a grocery store and serves the people and gets acquainted with them. Through him and others who do the same thing, I get in touch with all the families of the West End."⁴⁹

⁴⁹ *Boston Herald*, June 16, 1907.



Courtesy Harvard College Library

TIMOTHY D. SULLIVAN

CHAPTER II

"BIG TIM" SULLIVAN

A place among American municipal overlords belongs to "Big Tim" Sullivan not because he actually dominated New York City, as did Tweed, Kelly, Croker, and Murphy, although perhaps he might have done so had he wished, but rather because no one else could hope to rule the city without his acquiescence. In spite of the fact that he had been christened Timothy Daniel, Boss Sullivan rarely heard himself so addressed, for "Big Tim" or "Big Feller" or "Dry Dollar" suited better the fancy of Bowery constituents and outside associates alike. The cognomen "Dry Dollar" held sway during early political days, when as a bartender he attracted attention by a habit of carefully drying the bar before handing out the change. "Big Tim" or the "Big Feller," applied on account of bodily size, were commonly used during the latter part of Sullivan's political career.

Born in the old Five Points district of the East Side of New York City on February 6, 1863, "Big Tim" embodied the life and traditions of that well-known section throughout his life, refusing to follow the rather common practice of bosses who, when success has been achieved, have removed from political bailiwicks and established homes in exclusive sections. His loyalty to old associations during the days of prosperity, when he might have left the sordidness, the din of noises, and all the derelicts of the Bowery behind, accounts in no small measure for the absolute political control which he exercised for so many years over the district.¹

The Sullivan family possessed characteristics essentially Irish. The parents were natives of Ireland, and the children, of whom there were three, Timothy and two girls, grew up

¹ See the *New York Tribune*, September 29, 1901, sec. 5, p. 13.

among the hordes of Celtic immigrants who filled the East Side to overflowing before the days of the Hebrews. The family enjoyed no great prosperity even when the father supported it. After his death, in the eighth year of young Tim, the widow with her small children commanded very little in the way of material goods of any description.²

Tim attended school until his father died. Then he worked to help support his mother and sisters. The days at school, although few indeed, apparently impressed the boy to some extent, for his well-known practice of giving away shoes to the needy of the Bowery sprang from an incident that happened at school. On a very cold day in February, as "Big Tim" always used to tell the story, the teacher, a Miss Murphy, gave Tim a ticket which entitled him to a pair of shoes if presented to one Timothy Brennan. "Big Tim" always gave away shoes on that same day in February, when after a time his days of poverty passed away.

At first eight-year-old Tim worked as a newsboy. The next year he became a printer's devil and soon thereafter achieved a place as bundle boy and hustler in the newspaper offices on Park Row. For a time he served as bartender but succeeded so well that he owned six liquor establishments while yet a young man. After the first discouraging months as newsboy and devil Timothy did very well, for he dabbled in anything that seemed to offer good returns and before many years operated numerous theatrical houses in addition to his liquor saloons.³

Sullivan commanded a good-sized following among the boys of the neighborhood all through his teens. He attributed the early opening of his political career to an exciting battle with a pugilist whom he once found beating a woman. By whipping the bully he drew around his person

² See the *New York Tribune*, July 2, 1905, 16:1.

³ *New York Times*, September 14, 1913, sec. 2, 2:4.

the most promising young men of the Bowery and established a reputation that went far in the rough scramble of district politics.⁴ During the years as leader of this gang of young roughnecks Tim took part in many a bar-room free-for-all and not infrequently went to court to answer for disturbing the peace. Nevertheless, he managed to keep control of his restive gang in this way.

His gang naturally drew the attention of such Tammany worthies as "Paddy" Divver, "Fatty" Walsh, and Henry Purroy. Young Sullivan, therefore, branched out into politics under their tutelage. When he was twenty-three years of age, the Tammany organization of the district elected him to the state assembly, where he served for eight consecutive terms. Tim did not need backing long, for he speedily became powerful in his own name. After his eight years in the lower house of the state legislature he went up to the senate for an even longer continuous term of nine years. Later, after a congressional experience, he returned to the state senate.

Both houses of the legislature allowed Sullivan a good many opportunities, especially when the Democrats stood to the fore. He usually took an active part in the proceedings, held fairly important committee assignments, and introduced numerous measures for enactment. In 1896, an off year for the Democrats, he served on the senate committees on commerce and navigation, forest, fish, and game laws, and miscellaneous corporations.⁵ A large part of his legislative proposals had to do with furthering his popularity among the seekers of public favor on the Bowery and hence lack in general importance. Typical measures introduced by Sullivan provided that the birthday of Columbus should be a legal

⁴A rather interesting account of Sullivan's activities and development during this period may be had from the mouths of his friends and followers in *House Document*, No. 6748, 63 Cong., 2 sess., CLI.

⁵*Brooklyn Daily Almanac*, 1896 (Brooklyn, 1896), pp. 286-287.

holiday and that the price of gas in New York City should be reduced to ninety cents per thousand cubic feet. However, such laws as the one bearing Sullivan's name, which prohibits the carrying of revolvers without a permit, possibly have accomplished some good.

In 1902 "Big Tim" ran for Congress in the Eighth District and received twice as many votes as his opponent.⁶ However, although reelected to the Fifty-ninth Congress and after an interval chosen to represent a part of New York City in the Sixty-third Congress, Washington disappointed him, for as he remarked at the expiration of the second term, "A congressman may sound all right in New York, but in Washington they hitch horses to him."⁷ The records do not show that Sullivan took much part in any of the proceedings of the Fifty-eighth Congress. His one committee assignment placed his name next to the last. The measures which he sponsored mainly belong to the class of pension claims, and even these did not total any great number. In the first session of the Fifty-eighth Congress he introduced eight measures all told, of which two provided relief, five pensions, and one sought to remove the charge of desertion from a former soldier in the army.⁸ In the second session of the same Congress he introduced eleven bills or joint resolutions. Six of the eleven provided pensions, four concerned relief, and one proposed to remove charges of desertion.⁹ In the third session he introduced five bills and joint resolutions, of which three had to do with pensions, one with relief, and one with a charge of desertion.¹⁰ As a colleague in the House, John J. Fitzgerald, remarked in his eulogy on

⁶ Sullivan received 26,107 votes and his opponent 10,386. See the *Congressional Directory*, 58 Cong., 1 sess., p. 78.

⁷ *New York Times*, October 26, 1915, 10:4.

⁸ *Congressional Record*, 58 Cong., 1 sess., XXXVII.

⁹ *Congressional Record*, 58 Cong., 2 sess., XXXVIII.

¹⁰ *Congressional Record*, 58 Cong., 3 sess., XXXIX.

"Big Tim," Congress "was not his field," for he was out of his element.¹¹

The political organization built up by Sullivan naturally differed somewhat from those of other bosses. In the first place his bailiwick comprised a part rather than the whole of a city. Then, too, he joined his machine to the Tammany organization, which covered the entirety of Manhattan, and served as a representative on the Tammany executive committee. Beginning his career in politics under Tammany worthies, "Dry Dollar" soon built up a following which overshadowed his tutors. The important places in this organization he usually assigned to relatives. "Little Tim," a cousin, held the chief lieutenantcy and in addition managed the board of aldermen, represented the Sixth Assembly District on the Tammany executive committee, and finally moved up to the state assembly, where he worked in conjunction with "Dry Dollar" who then sat in the senate.¹² Florry Sullivan, Christie Sullivan, and Larry Mulligan, all relatives, occupied other places in the system.

Loyal followers of "Big Tim" made up what was known as the Timothy D. Sullivan Association. This society had headquarters and clubrooms at 203 and later at 207 The Bowery. As early as 1885 the association began to hold annual outings and picnics, and these finally became the greatest event of all the year in the Bowery, with a parade glorious in decorations and a blaring brass band marching early in the morning to take a specially chartered steamer for the country. Tickets, selling at five dollars each, provided some eats, an average of twenty-five drinks of liquor apiece, and left a substantial balance in the political treasury.¹³ The whole tribe of the Sullivans led the way to the steamer and

¹¹ *House Document*, No. 6748, 63 Cong., 2 sess., CLI, p. 14.

¹² A sketch of "Little Tim" may be found in the *New York Tribune*, December 7, 1902, sec. 2, 14:3.

¹³ See the *New York Tribune*, September 15, 1903, 2:3.

directed the events of the day. Half the city police force and nearly all the city officials usually participated. The *New York Tribune* goes so far as to say that "it was the joyous picnic . . . that made the Sullivans great."¹⁴ Altogether more than three thousand persons ordinarily attended these outings.¹⁵

Possessing unfailing energy "Big Tim" shouldered most of the burdens of the organization himself. In a district it may be more feasible to attempt such a task than in an entire city. Nevertheless, it is difficult to pick out any other municipal boss who commanded the ability to spread himself among half a million people, being at half a dozen places at one time and combining petty detail with important policies. "Dry Dollar" succeeded remarkably well in his undertaking. He knew personally every person of importance among the half million people of his bailiwick which included everything east of Broadway from the Battery to Saint Mark's Place. He arranged bail and pardons for offenders against the law, provided relief for the poor and flowers for the ill and deceased, secured building permits, extensions on commercial paper, and railroad passes, and finally even made loans from his own pocket to the business men of the district. Reference may be made by way of example to a man who borrowed \$100,000 to establish a bank and died owing Sullivan the entire sum.¹⁶ It is not strange that practically every house in the Bowery contained a picture of the boss, for he found time to attend even the parties of the Russian Jews and at Christmas provided dinner, with turkey, mince pie, and all the trimmings, for all the poor and derelict who presented themselves at his headquarters.¹⁷

¹⁴ June 23, 1903, 4:1.

¹⁵ Accounts of especially notable outings may be found in the *New York Tribune* for August 2, 1894, 8:1, and September 15, 1903, 2:3.

¹⁶ See the *New York Tribune*, September 29, 1901, sec. 5, 13:1.

¹⁷ For a description of one of these feasts see *House Document*, No. 6748, 63 Cong., 2 sess., CLI, p. 43.

As his name implies, "Big Tim" was large physically. He weighed from one hundred and ninety to two hundred pounds and stood six feet and one inch in height. He had broad shoulders, brown hair, and a smooth-shaven face, but the distinctive characteristic apart from size took the form of a "beaming smile . . . never overshadowed."¹⁸ Mr. Sullivan neither drank liquor nor smoked tobacco, and his word had the reputation of certainty. Nevertheless, he made money in all sorts of unscrupulous ways. Being generous almost to a fault with followers, until relatives had to interfere in order to protect him from imposition, he granted very few favors to those from whom no returns could be expected. However, a diplomatic manner, coupled with considerable tact, made refusals less harmful than they might otherwise have been. Then, too, most of the Bowery folks could be expected to give political support in return for such consideration. In order to retain his place in the affections of his constituents, "Big Tim" distributed half a ton of coal to every needy family during the coal strike of 1902 and upon going abroad for the first time in 1905 promised the people a new lodging house when he returned.¹⁹ Most social workers considered Sullivan a pest, because he gave aid so unscientifically.

Friends and associates included the worst wrecks of the Bowery as well as eminent men of the city and nation. With either type, "Big Tim," gifted with a mighty "cheek" which gave him supreme confidence in himself, felt thoroughly at home. As a gambler he refused to allow political prejudices to interfere and ordinarily placed bets on each side during the course of a campaign.²⁰ Two lodges enrolled him as an

¹⁸ *New York Tribune*, December 7, 1902, sec. 2, 14:3.

¹⁹ See the *New York Tribune*, October 5, 1902, 2:4; July 2, 1905, 16:1; and July 4, 1905, 9:4.

²⁰ For a bet on Seth Low, bitter opponent of Sullivan, see the *New York Tribune*, October 25, 1903, 1:5.

active member, the Elks and the Eagles. The race track never failed to command his intense interest and if possible his presence. Mr. Sullivan remained a member of the Roman Catholic Church throughout his life. After funeral services in old Saint Patrick's Cathedral he was buried beside his faithful aide, "Little Tim," in Calvary Cemetery.

In business "Dry Dollar" enjoyed the reputation during his lifetime of being extraordinarily successful, although it was common knowledge that he handled his financial affairs somewhat carelessly. He owned seven theatres in New York City and thirty in other parts of the country. In addition he dealt largely in the stock market and at his death owed August Belmont the sum of \$242,923.51 on account of Interborough stock alone.²¹ Altogether he acquired nearly a million dollars face value of mining stock and among other interests owned stock in race track and jockey clubs, advertising, safe deposit, printing, real estate, automobile, construction, and municipal autobus companies, and in news, agricultural, and animal breeding associations. At his death common report appraised his estate at not less than five million dollars, but after the litigation of seven years in the courts it finally turned out to be insolvent.²² Gustavus A. Rogers, attorney for the receiver, once remarked that Sullivan must have been the "easiest man in the world to interest in new enterprises and to be induced to invest in them."²³

Sullivan was married in the eighties to Miss Helen Fitzgerald, but did not live with her for many years preceding her death in 1911. Although Mrs. Helen Fitzgerald Sullivan admitted no children, "Big Tim" left at least two daughters. Mabel, born September 25, 1892, whose mother had been a childhood friend of Sullivan, received a fifty

²¹ *New York Times*, June 2, 1916, 7:2.

²² *New York Times*, November 21, 1920, 14:6, and January 12, 1921, 6:2.

²³ *New York Times*, November 21, 1920, 14:6.

thousand dollar insurance policy at her father's death.²⁴ The other daughter, Margaret Catharine, was awarded a similar policy by order of Justice Cohalan.²⁵

Without being garrulous or endowed to any great extent with talent for oratory, "Big Tim" enjoyed the reputation of being able to fill any hall on the East Side when he spoke. On such occasions he used the Bowery dialect. In one address Sullivan spoke after this fashion, "You take some grandly educated feller, brought and rung in on the district. He looks at things wid different colored glasses. I look at things wid de glasses like my constituents."²⁶ It cannot be fairly said that he used severe means to maintain his political control, for although by no means a harmless opponent to enemies, he dominated his district through generosity and personal attractiveness together with incessant activity.

The Sullivans enjoyed political success almost without exception from the late eighties of the nineteenth century until 1909. Practically every saloon, pool room, and gambling house in the district served as an active center for vote-getting and afterwards payrolls were opened to reward faithful political workers. The Comanche Club, the Association headquarters, and numerous lodging houses and saloons of the Bowery registered hundreds of "mattress" voters at every election and thus helped to swell the Sullivan vote. The fruits of victory in politics usually mounted high. Numerous public offices and generous slices of the patronage of police, fire, and especially street departments were only a part of the spoil. Even the tenement house, the water, and the park departments turned accommodating countenances to the Sullivans when Tammany controlled.²⁷ "Little Tim,"

²⁴ *New York Times*, January 3, 1916, 9:2.

²⁵ *New York Times*, December 10, 1913, 22:2.

²⁶ *New York Tribune*, November 3, 1902, 2:4.

²⁷ *New York Tribune*, September 19, 1901, 1:3.

from his station on the board of aldermen, managed that body "as if it had been a Sullivan-owned concern."²⁸

Tammany gave "Big Tim" a place next to that occupied by the boss. Both "Big and Little Tim" served on its executive committee, and it is not going too far to say that during their happier days no one could have become or remained leader without their consent. When the other members of the executive committee dared display no sign of independence in the face of Dick Croker, "Big Tim" made the open boast that it was "easy to get votes for Sullivan in the Sixth, but hard to get them for Croker."²⁹

Luck, always so considerate, turned in 1907 and thereafter never rallied to its old height. Florrie, leader of the Eighth, died in 1907, and in 1909 a bad defeat, wholly unexpected, broke the record of continuous success at the polls. The turning down of Chris Sullivan, who headed the county ticket in 1909 as candidate for sheriff, connoted nothing short of sheer dishonor for the proud Sullivan tribe. Then, in December, 1909, "Little Tim," chief aide, died and left no one to fill his place. The Tammany break with McClellan and Gaynor with consequent lean pickings of patronage, the checking of racing in New York State, and last but not least the crowding out of the Irish by the Hebrews, all combined to crush Tim's long dominance. He went back to the state senate, but the flood could not be stemmed.

Between September, 1910, and August, 1913, Sullivan spent much of the time outside of New York City. Sometimes he was in Albany. Again he attended political meetings or traveled about looking after theatrical interests. More often he was off in search of sporting events. During the latter part of the period a disease, which threatened mental as well as physical breakdown, attacked him, and in

²⁸ *New York Evening Post*, January 11, 1913, 1:4.

²⁹ *New York Tribune*, September 19, 1901, 1:3.

January, 1913, Justice Amend of the Supreme Court of New York committed "Big Tim" to a sanitarium for mental treatment.³⁰ Though under the constant care of nurses from that time on, Sullivan escaped during the night late in August, 1913, and was run over and killed by a New Haven freight train. The body lay unrecognized in the public morgue for thirteen days, an ironic fate for the remains of perhaps the most widely known man in New York City, and was about to be buried in the potter's field when it was accidentally identified.³¹

Perhaps no more eulogistic epitaph for "Big Tim" could be devised than some words contained in the printed program of the Timothy D. Sullivan Association Annual Outing and Picnic of 1895, "Truly can we say of such a model statesman, philanthropist, and ideal citizen that his name deserves the reverence of posterity, his fame the praise of ages, and his illustrious deeds the perpetual homage of countless years."³²

³⁰ *New York Evening Post*, January 11, 1913, 1:4.

³¹ *New York Times*, August 21-September 14, 1913.

³² *New York Tribune*, September 17, 1895, 1:1.

CHAPTER III

"HONORABLE" WILLIAM M. TWEED

The distinction of being the first acclaimed American municipal boss has ordinarily been awarded to William Marcy Tweed. And while bosses have come and bosses have gone, he has retained a prominent place in the interest of Americans, perhaps partially because of Lord Bryce's classic although somewhat inaccurate portrayal. For bold daring and general picturesque character he has a unique reputation, although, as a matter of fact, certain other municipal barons, who are not so well known, equal Tweed in both respects.

Born April 3, 1823, in the city of New York, Willie Tweed was the youngest child in a family of three boys and two girls. Three generations of Tweeds before William had resided in New York City. The paternal great grandfather, a sturdy smithy, emigrated to the United States from Kelso on the River Tweed in Scotland. Phillip Tweed, the grandfather, also a blacksmith, kept a shop on Rutgers Street. Richard Tweed, William's father, engaged in chair-making first as a laborer and later as a manufacturer and finally succeeded well enough to add to his interests a partnership in a brushmaking concern. Still in the prime of life he retired from business with a comfortable income and sound reputation. The *New York Times* of May 19, 1860, contains a notice of his death at the age of seventy years.¹

William's mother belonged to a Long Island family of considerable American residence. She seems to have been a woman of unusual energy, for she had the reputation of being such an excellent housekeeper that there was small comfort to be had in her house. Nevertheless, she displayed

¹For additional information concerning the Tweed family, see the *New York World*, April 13, 1878; *New York Tribune*, April 13, 1878; and Dennis T. Lynch, "*Boss*" *Tweed* (New York, 1927), pp. 13 ff.

so much fondness for William, who was her favorite and resembled her in appearance, that it is not surprising that he became a spoiled child.² The family home, located in the Fourth Ward at 24 Cherry Street, stood in the midst of what was at the time a quiet and respectable middle class residential district.

As a child William off and on attended a public school near his home. But the spirit of thrift in his family mounted so high that he went to work in his father's chair factory at an early age and labored alongside of his brother Richard until, on account of lack of mechanical skill, his father allowed him to become a salesman in the saddle and hardware shop of Isaac Fryer. After a year in this shop, during which time he acquired a consuming ambition to learn book-keeping, he received permission, being about thirteen years old, to enroll in the school of Reverend John T. Halsey at Elizabethtown, New Jersey.

At the end of one year in school William felt satisfied that he had sufficiently exposed himself to an education and accepted a post as bookkeeper with J. & G. C. Alexander, tobacco merchants, at the munificent salary of fifty dollars per year. Two years later he transferred to D. Berrien & Company, the brush concern in which his father owned stock, and in two years achieved a junior partnership because of his interest and ability as a salesman.

During his ten years with D. Berrien & Company, Tweed accumulated a small amount of money and at the age of twenty-eight years decided to go into the chair business with his father and brother. The father aided quite liberally and the business started out with a prospect of considerable success. However, in spite of a large volume of trade the

² For information in regard to Eliza Tweed, see C. F. Wingate, "An Episode in Municipal Government," *North American Review*, CXIX (1874), 361.

venture became insolvent in 1859 and was closed out with liabilities amounting to over two hundred thousand dollars. William apparently felt no great responsibility for the unsatisfied debts, although it seems to have been his own lack of attention to business that caused the failure.

From youth William had been leader of a gang which partially justified its existence by stealing pig tails from meat and provision shops.³ Later he joined the volunteer fire department and finally helped in the founding of Americus Fire Engine Company Number 6, commonly known as the "Big Six."⁴ His interest in the fire company undoubtedly overshadowed the chair factory and represents an important cause of its bankruptcy. Tweed's political career may be traced to his gang and fire associations, for both gangs and volunteer fire companies took an active and an important part in the politics of the period. In the competition among the fire companies for first place in the public eye "Big Six," in spite of its slight age, attracted attention by a liberty pole contest in which Tweed figured, by parades and exhibitions, and by a trip to Washington where it was received by President Fillmore. William Tweed, soon elected foreman because of his bubbling spirits and real capacity as a leader, stood out as the dominating figure in his own "Big Six."

As early as 1850 Tweed definitely entered politics as an unsuccessful candidate for the office of assistant alderman. He met defeat by less than fifty votes. The year 1852 treated him somewhat more kindly and allowed him to win a Seventh Ward election to the board of aldermen. Here he was assigned to two standing committees and several special committees and made chairman of the promising

³ See M. P. Breen, *Thirty Years of New York Politics* (New York, 1899), p. 47.

⁴ *New York Tribune*, July 29, 1871, 2:1.

committee on repairs and supplies.⁵ The dominant group in the board, known as the "Forty Thieves" because of proclivities along the line of rapacious speculation and bribery, recognized Tweed as a valuable acquisition and made him one of their number. And Tweed soon came to the fore as one of several leading spirits. Curiously enough he found it rather thrilling to preside over the board and frequently acted as temporary chairman. But perhaps the most interesting monument to the term on the board takes the form of an eulogy, concluding with an original poem, delivered at the death of Henry Clay. It ran thus:

Mr. President: Our whole country is again in tears! Scarcely were the remains of the lamented Calhoun cold in the tomb, ere another brilliant and magnanimous statesman has gone to his silent and eternal repose. . . . Being probably the youngest member of this body (approximately twenty-nine years of age) I cannot be supposed to have long mingled in public affairs, but with all deference, I trust that I am tolerably familiar with the lives of Jefferson and Hamilton, those great intellectual giants of the Revolution, who laid the eternal foundations of the two leading political parties of our country. . . . Where are the men to fill the vacant seats of these exalted statesmen? Alas, they do not exist. But men of kindred genius will again arise among us, if we are true to the God of liberty and of nations. . . . Jackson, Calhoun, Clay! let the verdure of their graves forever bloom, and emit undying fragrance. Forever let their sacred memory be green in our hearts. Forever let us gratefully remember their noble deeds, and impart them to our children, as worthy of their highest emulation.

Farewell fathers! cold in the ground!
 Who loved and served thy race so well;
 Thy sons still live to guard thy mound,
 And thy great deeds their children tell.⁶

⁵ *Proceedings of the Board of Aldermen of the City of New York*, XLV, pp. 40, 41.

⁶ *Documents of the Board of Aldermen of the City of New York*, XIX, Part II, pp. 1460-1464.

Before his term as alderman had expired, Tweed began a campaign in the Fifth District for election to the House of Representatives of the United States. Through good use of small patronage and an energetic campaign he was elected in 1852. Altogether Congress did not prove nearly as pleasant or as profitable as Tweed had anticipated. His sole committee assignment chanced to be to the committee on invalid pensions, and even here his name appeared last on the list, a galling humiliation for one with the pride of Tweed.⁷ For the most part the "Honorable" was out of his element, for although he continued to make frequent calls for yeas and nays and motions of various sorts, he failed to make the impression that he had on the New York City board of aldermen.⁸ His only speech of any length concerned the Nebraska and Kansas bill and was printed rather than delivered. It ran in part as follows:

There are times in the history of a people when it becomes necessary to reconsider acts sanctioned by their fathers and long usage. . . . In the progress of all countries from barbarism to civilization laws are repealed (as they become inoperative) by the passage of other acts, or as the people awaken to their gross injustice. . . . Actuated by motives as selfish, and a spirit as aggrandizing, the enemies to the incorporation of Nebraska and Kansas have opened their batteries, and poured the hot shot of deprecation and abuse upon the man or men who dare defend the abrogation of the Missouri Compromise. Well, sir, let them visit me with their anathemas, it will have no more effect than their baying the moon. . . . Sir, all geographical lines (referring to the Missouri Compromise) that encroach upon the rights of any portion of this Confederacy are wrong in their inception, wrong in their enactment, and wrong in their enforcement, although girt about with the age of an hundred years. . . . Let us endeavor to make this Union a political paradise,

⁷ *Congressional Directory*, 33 Cong., 1 sess., p. 6.

⁸ *Congressional Globe*, 33 Cong., 1 sess., pp. 436, 1169, 1170, 1172, 1174, 1179, and 2 sess., pp. 602, 760, 353.

from which we may never be driven; and over whose gateway may blaze no sword of fire, but the cheering words, enter and live. . . . Sir, I am in favor of their bill, because it gives to the people of the Territories the power to control the question of slavery. . . . I speak of it more in sorrow than in anger, and I utter it as a Northern man, when I say their (the clergy's) attempts to control the legislation of the country is as outrageous as it is infamous. When did it come to pass that these divines were empowered of God to preach a crusade against Congress?

They build him altars, in their zeal,
Where knaves shall minister and fools shall kneel;
Where faith may mutter o'er her mystic spell
Written in Blood—and Bigotry swell
The sail he spreads from Heaven
With blasts from Hell.⁹

At the conclusion of the Thirty-third Congress Mr. Tweed found himself without a job and worst of all out of touch with New York City politics. In desperation he ran for alderman, only to be defeated by the "Know Nothings." The only place to materialize for a discouragingly long time was a commissionership on the board of education, and, although this office lay somewhat outside his field, it involved school-house and supply contracts, and hence he accepted it with alacrity.

Beginning with the year 1857, the "Honorable" entered into a period of political prosperity. First of all, he ensconced himself securely in a seat on the board of supervisors of the city and county of New York. The *Proceedings* from 1857 until 1870 show that he took a noisy part, making frequent motions to adjourn and to suspend the rules.¹⁰ His

⁹ *Ibid.*, 33 Cong., 1 sess., appendix, pp. 668-669. For verbal remarks see, 1 sess., p. 1155.

¹⁰ See, for example, *Proceedings of the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of New York, July 1-December 31, 1860*, pp. 13, 207, 235, 275, 761.

colleagues chose him presiding officer for a quartet of terms and allowed him to sit on the committees having to do with annual taxes, a new court house, and civil courts and to chairman the committee on county officers.¹¹

Along in 1844 Mr. Tweed married a Miss Mary Skaden, the daughter of J. C. Skaden, his senior partner in the brush factory. In all eight children, four boys and four girls, came to the Tweed home, of whom three attained some prominence during their lives. A son, William M., Junior, closely associated himself with his father in various business and political enterprises. He held the post of assistant district attorney in the court of general sessions at one time, served as brigadier-general on the staff of Governor Hoffman, acted as receiver of the Credit Mobilier of America and of the Union Pacific Railroad Company, and held a partnership in the Metropolitan Hotel.¹² Two daughters married members of the Maginnis family of New Orleans and gained much publicity from magnificent weddings. One of the girls attracted wedding presents valued at seven hundred thousand dollars all told.¹³ For several years before her death Mrs. Tweed was an invalid. She appears to have been a woman of more than ordinary refinement. She had the reputation of being an active churchwoman and held membership in St. Paul's Methodist Episcopal Church.¹⁴ Perhaps because it cost him approximately fifty thousand dollars a year to maintain them, Mr. Tweed was "proud of his wife and devoted to his children."¹⁵

¹¹ *Proceedings of the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of New York*, July 1-December 31, 1860, p. 40, and July 1-December 31, 1862, pp. 25, 64.

¹² See John D. Townsend, *New York in Bondage* (New York, 1901), p. 47; *New York Times*, December 4, 1868, 1:3; *New York Sun*, October 27, 1877; and *Proceedings in the New York Court of Impeachment in the Matter of the Impeachment of George G. Barnard* (3 vols., Albany, 1874), II, 999.

¹³ M. P. Breen, *Thirty Years of New York Politics*, p. 341.

¹⁴ *New York Tribune*, April 13, 1878, 2:1, and April 18, 1878, 5:5.

¹⁵ *New York Sun*, April 13, 1878, and October 18, 1877.

"Honorable" Tweed commanded attention by a weight of from two hundred and eighty to three hundred and twenty pounds. He stood about five feet and ten inches in height. In spite of his great size he worked diligently and handled himself well. He once declared, "Idleness is my aversion," and a certain lady wrote, "He was one of the best waltzers it was ever my good fortune to meet."¹⁶ His large and somewhat florid face had prominent features but was redeemed by a twinkle in his "bright blue eyes" and a not unpleasant smile. Brown hair, a mustache, and closely cropped chin whiskers adorned him. He derived much satisfaction from display of massive jewelry, maintained two gorgeous residences on Fifth Avenue, and sported an expensive steam yacht. His silver-fitted mahogany stables at his country place were the talk of the countryside. Mr. Tweed drank at times, spouted profanity, and consorted with the famous mistress of Colonel Fisk; yet he refused to use tobacco and curiously enough warned his young followers of its dangers.¹⁷

Affable and gay, although somewhat temperamental at times, Tweed infused new life into almost any assemblage. His bearing veered between gruffness and suavity, with bluster holding sway much of the time. Sympathetic and cordial to those whom he desired to see, with a kind word for almost everybody, and loyal to friends far beyond the average, his genius for attracting people and making friends mounted very high. He numbered his friends in every walk of life, in spite of the fact that he has been given a reputation for vulgarity. Jay Gould and James Fisk, Junior, were his cronies. But he knew more or less intimately Astor, Vanderbilt, and Stewart. He counted as acquaintances Ray-

¹⁶ *New York Sun*, October 27, 1877, and *Cincinnati Times-Star*, November 1, 1884, p. 6.

¹⁷ See the *Proceedings in the New York Court of Impeachment in the Matter of the Impeachment of George G. Barnard*, II, 366.

mond, Bennett, and Ottendorfer and engaged as a partner of Horace Greeley in the tobacco business. Even the reformer-clergyman, Henry Ward Beecher, admitted that he had at any rate carried on a conversation with Tweed. Perhaps one reason for his wide circle of friends and acquaintances was his excellent memory for names and faces. He boasted of the fact during his stay in Ludlow Street prison that he could name one out of every four of the numerous persons who passed by on the sidewalk in front of his apartment. A keen sense of humor, a trait of lavishness when he entertained, and the ability to handle embarrassing social situations diplomatically also contributed to his success in making and keeping friends.

In some respects "Honorable" Tweed necessarily admitted deficiency. Perhaps his greatest weakness took the form of excessive vanity and an insatiable appetite for flattery. Then, too, he tended to be a poor judge of men. Many of his associates took advantage of his fondness for praise and seriously crippled his effectiveness at times. He was a "pure disciple of expediency and policy," absolutely without scruples during the height of his political career, and inclined to be superficial in certain respects. For example, he subscribed to all the daily newspapers as a matter of principle and on that basis prided himself on being a wide and discriminating reader.¹⁸

As a public speaker Mr. Tweed by no means excelled. Nevertheless, he spoke frequently, in spite of the thickness of his voice which made him difficult to understand and disagreeable to listen to. While very ambitious for power and

¹⁸ For personal characteristics, see the *New York World*, April 13, 1878; *New York Sun*, April 13, 1878; and the *New York Tribune*, April 13, 1878, January 1, 1872, 8:1, and August 1, 1871, 5:5. See also James Bryce, *The American Commonwealth* (3 vols., London, 1888), III, 177; M. P. Breen, *Thirty Years of New York Politics*, pp. 51, 52, 564, 565; and Gustavus Myers, *The History of Tammany Hall* (New York, 1917), pp. 233-235.

willing to acquire money by fair means or foul, his liberality to the poor convinced the multitude more than the verdicts of several courts, and they long remembered him. It was not unusual for him to contribute as much as \$50,000 for poor relief at Christmas time.¹⁹

To a question as to his religion Mr. Tweed once replied that he had "None." He displayed some interest in theological dogmas in the abstract and in the long days of imprisonment in Ludlow Street jail spent some time reading and committing portions of the Bible to memory to please his wife. But personal religion had little place in Mr. Tweed's life.²⁰ He belonged to the Masonic Lodge and shone as leader of the Americus Club whose luxurious club house graced the shore at Indian Neck near Greenwich, Connecticut.

Like other municipal overlords, Mr. Tweed allied himself with numerous business interests. As partner of Jay Gould and James Fisk, Junior, he not only occupied a seat on the board of directors of the Erie Railroad but handled all its "business" at Albany.²¹ Then, too, he served as a director of the Tenth National Bank of New York City, a director of the New York Railway Company, a trustee of Brooklyn Bridge, a director of the Fairfield Fire Insurance Company, and owned outright the *New York Transcript*, the New York Printing Company, and the Manufacturing Stationers' Company.²² Various real estate holdings brought his total wealth to a considerable sum, especially about the year 1870.

¹⁹ Gustavus Myers, *The History of Tammany Hall*, p. 230.

²⁰ See the *New York Tribune*, April 13, 1878, 1:6, and April 18, 1878, 5:5.

²¹ Tweed's Testimony, New York City Board of Aldermen, *Special Committee to Investigate the Ring Frauds* (New York, 1878), pp. 147-151.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 126, 203; John D. Townsend, *New York in Bondage*, p. 63; Abram Polhemus Gennug, *The Frauds of New York City Government Exposed* (New York, 1871), *passim*; and *New York Tribune*, August 17, 1871, 1:5.

In 1871 he transferred to his eldest son real estate valued at \$1,584,000 exclusive of mortgages.²³ In his testimony before the aldermanic committee the "Honorable" admitted that his wealth had amounted to approximately two and a half million dollars in 1871, claimed that it had never exceeded three million dollars, and declared that he had gone through it all in one way or another until he had nothing left.²⁴

Soon after becoming comfortably settled in the board of supervisors, "Statesman" Tweed directed his attention to the construction of a political machine. It happened that Tammany Hall offered more than any machine that could be quickly set up, provided it could be captured. Early in the sixties the "Honorable" gained some influence in the management of the Hall and wormed himself into the seat of permanent chairman of the general committee, which was largely an honorary office. Finally in 1868 he achieved a goal of years and donned the blankets of grand sachem in the Tammany Society. Closely concentrating the energy of the Hall on political matters, Mr. Tweed found it to be a tremendously effective tool. During this period Tweed obtained a seat on the Democratic state committee, began to manage state conventions and legislatures from a luxurious suite of rooms at the Delevan House, for which he paid a weekly rent of \$500, and in 1868 sat as a delegate in the Democratic national convention which met in the Tammany Wigwam.²⁵

Along with the office of supervisor Mr. Tweed sought and won other lucrative offices during the sixties. From 1860 to 1864 he held a fire commissionership and in 1861 ran for sheriff of New York County but was defeated by

²³ *New York Tribune*, January 1, 1872, 8:1.

²⁴ *Report*, p. 306.

²⁵ *New York Times*, July 7, 1868, 1:1; August 14, 1868, 1:2; and September 3, 1868, 1:1.

James Lynch. In 1863 Judge Barnard admitted him to the New York bar as a practicing attorney. More important than that, in the same year he captured the office of deputy street commissioner, which he held until 1870 when he became commissioner of public works. In as much as the latter office probably carried with it more patronage than any other in the city or county government, the "Statesman" used it to excellent advantage. In 1868 followers insisted that he represent them in the state senate, and in 1871 re-elected him in the face of the exposures.

Several circumstances barred "Tweedle-dee" domination in the early part of the decade beginning with 1860. Not the least important was a rival political organization, Mozart Hall. However, in the same year that the "Honorable" wrested control of Tammany Hall, Mozart Hall fell before his overtures, and two of its members, A. Oakey Hall and Albert Cardozo, later to be prominent in the Tweed Ring, joined his ranks.

By the year 1865 Tammany had been employed so effectively that Mr. Tweed found it possible to elect John T. Hoffman as mayor of New York City. From this time on his power increased rapidly until by the end of the decade it had reached its zenith. In 1868 with Hoffman governor of the state, A. Oakey Hall in the mayor's chair, George G. Barnard, Albert Cardozo, and J. H. McCunn on the bench, and the board of supervisors, the board of aldermen, the school board, the street department, the city comptroller, the corporation counsel, the treasurer of the city and county, and a powerful faction in the state legislation, all subject to his beck and call, Mr. Tweed well-nigh ruled absolutely.²⁶

Early in the sixties various political rings had been formed in the board of supervisors for the profit of certain

²⁶ See the *New York Times*, November 5, 1868, and December 2, 1868. Also see James Bryce, *The American Commonwealth*, III, 182.

political worthies. Tweed had had an interest in most of them, but they were temporary, achieved no great record for graft, and require little attention here. During the administration of Mayor Hoffman a ring, composed of Tweed, Hoffman, Cornell, and Brennan, grew up and vanished without attaining great notoriety. By 1869 a ring, made up of Tweed, Mayor "O. K." Hall, Comptroller "Slippery Dick" Connolly, "Brains" Peter B. Sweeney, and one or two others of minor importance, had assumed the place of the earlier ring and became active almost immediately in a system for robbing the city and county of New York of large sums of money. Most of the peculation took the form of padded bills rendered in connection with the construction of a new court house. At first the members of the ring demanded a rake-off of fifty-five per cent on all amounts paid by the supervisors, in July, 1869, the proportion was raised to sixty per cent, and in November of the same year it made another jump until the tradesmen received thirty-five per cent and the ring sixty-five per cent of all bills.²⁷ When the charter of 1870 abolished the board of supervisors and substituted a board of audit to settle outstanding bills, the thirty-five-sixty-five rate remained in effect. The total amount leaking out under this padded system is difficult to estimate but by admission of the ringsters it reached a high water mark of not less than eighteen million dollars.²⁸ In keeping with his position the "Honorable" retained for himself an honorarium of twenty-five per cent and generously gave the other forty per cent for division among his colleagues.²⁹ The character of the bills allowed by the supervisors under this padded system caused much surprise when they were made public. J. H. Keyser and Company received by record

²⁷ New York City Board of Aldermen, *Special Committee to Investigate the Ring Frauds*, p. 397.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 402.

²⁹ See *ibid.*, p. 399, for Tweed's own statement.

\$1,149,874.50 for "repairing fixtures" in a new court house, while Andrew J. Garvey, a plasterer, set up a record to be envied even by his highly-paid fellows of today by drawing \$138,187 for two days plastering in an iron building. Thermometers for the court house were billed at \$7,500 and forty chairs and three tables at \$179,729.60.³⁰

As long as it was necessary for the ringsters to depend on the board of supervisors, more or less friction manifested itself. Then, too, some with bills refused to go through the padding system and consequently stirred up trouble. Among these happened to be the stationery firm of Edward Jones and Company with claims totaling \$801,800.85. Mr. Jones out of vengeance threatened the ring by financing a group of political mal-contents, known as the "Young Democrats." The Young Democrats aimed at a new city charter and almost pushed one through the legislature. However, the "Honorable" drafted one of his own, which even more securely ensconced the ringsters, and by means of a bit of oil, amounting to more than \$600,000, secretly rushed its passage in time to checkmate the other charter.³¹ This charter abolished the supervisors, substituted a board of audit to settle all outstanding accounts and a board of apportionment to handle current finances, and centered the power in the hands of the mayor. Mr. Tweed became a member of both financial boards and in 1871 directed the expenditure of forty-eight million dollars.³²

The downfall came rapidly. Ex-Sheriff James O'Brien, notorious bolter of New York City politics, had claims ag-

³⁰ For examples of the bills allowed, see A. B. Paine, *Thomas Nast, His Period and His Pictures* (New York, 1904), pp. 175-176, and New York City Board of Aldermen, *Special Committee to Investigate the Ring Frauds*, *passim*.

³¹ See John D. Townsend, *New York in Bondage*, p. 31, and Mr. Tweed's personal testimony in New York City Board of Aldermen, *Special Committee to Investigate the Ring Frauds*, p. 73.

³² James Bryce, *The American Commonwealth*, III, 186-187.

gregating \$300,000, mostly fraudulent, which held over from the palmy days when he had basked in the office of sheriff. After Comptroller "Slippery Dick" Connolly had repeatedly refused to pay the claims, O'Brien secured his spy a position in the auditor's office. Soon after, when Auditor Watson was accidentally killed, Spy W. S. Copeland copied some of the damaging accounts for his master. With these in hand O'Brien dogged the footsteps of the ringsters and according to Tweed collected \$150,000 from him in person.³³ Apparently hoping to do more than fill his purse, he offered the evidence to several newspapers for publication. After several had refused, the *New York Times* began their publication by installment.

At first public sentiment did not favor receiving the startling revelations which appeared in the *Times* as anything more than propaganda, for an eminent committee, headed by John Jacob Astor, had in 1870 certified "that the financial affairs of the city under the charge of the comptroller are administered in a correct and faithful manner."³⁴ But when Samuel J. Tilden with the aid of the famous cartoonist, Thomas Nast, pushed on the fight, the end soon came. With most of the ringsters and their confederates taking necessary vacations in foreign resorts, only the "Statesman," confident that nothing could touch one so "Honorable" as he, remained to face the storm. But the press, the populace, and Samuel J. Tilden failed to regard Mr. Tweed as sacred and finally in October, 1871, forced him to submit to arrest. Nothing daunted, Mr. Tweed went about as usual on a million dollar bond signed by Jay Gould and associates.³⁵ In the trials the juries twice disagreed and then found him guilty on two hundred and four counts. In spite of the fact that Mr.

³³ James Bryce, *The American Commonwealth*, III, 191. See also Tweed's testimony in New York City Board of Aldermen, *Special Committee to Investigate the Ring Frauds*, p. 134.

³⁴ John D. Townsend, *New York in Bondage*, p. 38.

³⁵ See Gustavus Myers, *The History of Tammany Hall*, p. 242.

Tweed employed the eminent William Fullerton and a young attorney, Elihu Root, later to achieve even greater fame, he received a sentence of twelve years in prison and \$12,750 in fines.³⁶

It was on entrance to Blackwell's Island to serve out the prison term that Mr. Tweed returned the now historic replies to the questions of the warden: "Occupation?" "Statesman," "Religion?" "None." At the end of one year the court of appeals accomplished his release by refusing to sanction a cumulative sentence. Nevertheless, immediate re-arrest followed, and Mr. Tweed faced civil trial, made possible by a special act of the New York legislature, in a suit to recover six million dollars. In spite of the distinguished David Dudley Field, counsel for the defendant, the People won a judgment for \$6,537,117 against "Honorable" Tweed.³⁷

Pending the civil trial bail had been fixed at three million dollars. As a result of failure to raise so large a bail Mr. Tweed went to reside in Ludlow Street prison. However, seizing an opportunity when allowed to visit his home one day, he hied, in December, 1875, to the woods of New Jersey, then escaped by boat to Cuba, and finally enlisted as member of the crew on a fishing vessel bound for Spain. The Spanish authorities, recognizing the "Honorable," even in the guise of seaman, from the cartoons of Thomas Nast and thinking that he had been a kidnapper of children, held him. The prosecution began action for his return to the United States, although at the time there was no effective treaty on the subject of extradition between the two countries. Mr. Tilden, soon to be a candidate for the presidency, made the request for his return, and Secretary Hamilton Fish desired to make no refusal that could be used against the Republican party in the approaching election campaign.

³⁶ See M. P. Breen, *Thirty Years of New York Politics*, pp. 464-470, for an account of the trials.

³⁷ *New York Tribune*, March 9, 1876, 4:2.

In spite of the fact that there is some evidence to lead one to think that the authorities did not wish to have Tweed returned as a result of their grandstand play, Spain allowed extradition, and the prisoner returned in state on an armed vessel of the United States in time to witness the discomfiture of his opponent in the November election of 1876.³⁸

During 1877 various attempts to have the "Statesman" released from prison in return for his complete confession could not be or at least were not carried through, perhaps largely for political reasons.³⁹ At last in April, 1878, Mr. Tweed, a wreck, scarcely to be identified with the proud figure of 1870, died in Ludlow Street prison. His last words were, "I have tried to do some good, if I have not had good luck."⁴⁰

Ordinarily Mr. Tweed is remembered for his almost absolute domination of New York City, for the corruption of the ballot, which, as he testified, he had caused in every one of the twenty-two wards of the city, or for the enormous thefts of his ring from the public treasury.⁴¹ It is unfortunate that he has been almost always disassociated from New York life of the period. Even a casual appreciation necessitates a knowledge of his business activities, his friends, and indeed his background in general.

³⁸ See M. P. Breen, *Thirty Years of New York Politics*, pp. 560-565, for a vivid account of the escape and capture.

³⁹ Mr. John D. Townsend, who acted as Tweed's counsel during the period, has left a detailed account of the negotiations in *New York in Bondage*, pp. 113-151.

⁴⁰ *New York Times*, April 13, 1878, 1:7.

⁴¹ New York City Board of Aldermen, *Special Committee to Investigate the Ring Frauds*, p. 136. See also John I. Davenport, *The Election and Naturalization Frauds in New York City, 1860-1870* (New York, 1894), *passim*.



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"HONEST" JOHN KELLY

CHAPTER IV

"HONEST JOHN" KELLY

After the Tweed Ring exposures and the consequent defeat of its municipal ticket in 1871 Tammany Hall suffered from bad repute and a rapidly declining membership. In the latter part of 1871 Mr. John Kelly, who had been traveling in Europe during the halcyon days of the ring, returned to New York City, wrested control of the Hall from William M. Tweed, and entered upon a rather ambitious project for reviving the power of New York Democracy.

The date of John Kelly's birth hangs in the fire, with three authorities agreeing on April 21, 1821, and two refusing to budge from April 20, 1822.¹ In as much as J. Fairfax McLaughlin, an intimate of the family as well as Mr. Kelly's most elaborate biographer, sets the date as April 20, 1822, it seems fully as safe to accept this date as the one of a year earlier. "Honest John" was born in New York City in what is now the Bowery. His father, Hugh Kelly, hailing from County Tyrone, Ireland, had emigrated with his wife, once Sarah Donnelly of County Fermanagh, Ireland, to New York City in the early years of the nineteenth century. Five girls and two boys came to the Kelly home. Of these John ranked as the fourth child but elder son.²

After struggling with a small grocery store on Hester Street for some years, Hugh Kelly died, when John was

¹ Matthew P. Breen, *Thirty Years of New York Politics* (New York, 1899), p. 701; *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, III, 390; and the *New York Tribune*, September 13, 1879, 3:4, agree on the earlier date. J. F. McLaughlin, *The Life and Times of John Kelly* (New York, 1885), p. 9, and the *New York Tribune*, June 2, 1886, 1:6, support the later date.

² For additional information concerning the Kelly family, see the *New York Tribune*, September 26, 1880, 4:3, and June 2, 1886, 1:6, and J. F. McLaughlin, *The Life and Times of John Kelly*, pp. 9-11.

eight years of age, leaving his family with virtually no means of support. Nevertheless in spite of all the effort necessary to provide daily bread, Mrs. Kelly, a strong character of staunch Roman Catholic principles, brought the children up with such attention to religious matters that John seriously contemplated a monastic life. She died when her elder son was twenty-one years of age, and the other members of the family passed away prematurely one by one, until when Mr. Kelly began his career as overlord of New York City, only one sister remained alive.

With the large family and dwindling business of his father John necessarily received little in the way of formal education, although through keen powers of observation and an interest in reading, he finally became unusually well-educated. For the two or three years before the elder Kelly died and John was forced to leave school and obtain a job, he attended the parochial school, maintained by Saint Patrick's Cathedral. The only other school training came in an evening school after work hours.³

Efforts to secure a job brought forth no fruits until the elder James Gordon Bennett, then in the process of creating the *New York Herald* in a basement on Ann Street, hired John as office boy. He seems to have made good in the place and gained the interest of Mr. Bennett. However, driven on by his burden as chief breadwinner he decided, after a year with the *Herald*, to enter some line of work which would be larger in returns and hence became an apprentice to Jacob Creamer, a grate-setter and soapstone-cutter on Broome Street. This venture turned out well, and when not yet of age, Mr. Kelly set up on Elizabeth Street a soapstone and grate factory which did a large business. Together with some speculation in Harlem real estate the

³ See the *New York Tribune*, September 13, 1879, 3:4, and June 2, 1886, 2:1-3.

grate business occupied his attention for many years and brought in an income large enough to provide the younger members of the family with a good many advantages.⁴

During youth John manifested interest in a variety of things. By attaining some expertness in boxing and rowing he found it possible to become first private, then lieutenant, and finally captain of the Emmett Guards, a military organization of considerable prominence in New York City during the period. Kelly retained the captaincy of this militia until he entered the board of alderman and undoubtedly received political aid from it during earlier years. Then, too, he joined the volunteer fire department. In this connection he won fame as the champion of a certain burly truckman who sought to drive his team through the fire line. John seized the horses' heads, whereupon the driver leaped to attack but received such a "terrible blow" that it was three days before he could resume work. The Amateur Dramatic Association, formed for acting Shakespearean plays, enrolled Kelly as charter member and assigned him the parts of Hamlet and Macbeth to play. Despite the interest in military association, fire department, and dramatic club, he remained faithful to the church, driving the priests over their parishes and attending services regularly.⁵

Although Kelly's political career received impetus from fire department and military associations, antipathy for the "Know Nothings," who at the time controlled the politics of the ward and were actively hostile to the foreign population, immediately caused his entrance into politics. After attempts had been made to burn the Cathedral and the clergy had been insulted, "Honest John" decided that the only last-

⁴ For further information in regard to the early labors of Mr. Kelly, see J. F. McLaughlin, *The Life and Times of John Kelly*, p. 14, and the *New York Tribune*, September 26, 1880, 4:3, and June 2, 1886, 2:1-3.

⁵ See M. P. Breen, *Thirty Years of New York Politics*, p. 701, and the *New York Tribune*, June 2, 1886, 2:1-3.

ing solution would be to unite the Irish and Germans in the ward and break the "Know Nothing" political grip. Therefore, at the primary election he organized forces and in a fierce hand to hand battle, in which many blows were struck and some blood shed, decisively routed the foe and broke their political hold. Then he found himself not only master of the political situation in the Fifteenth but the hero of Irish and Germans throughout the city.⁶

At once, in November, 1853, the ward elected him an alderman. From the *Proceedings* of the board it does not appear that Kelly took an active part on the floor, although numerous petitions bearing his approval came before the board for action.⁷ In 1855 he served as chairman of the committee on arts and sciences and as member of the almshouse, sewers, and Croton Aqueduct committees.⁸ Nevertheless, he did not frequently report for any committee and seems to have distinguished himself largely by faithful attendance at sessions.

Before the first term as alderman had expired, "Honest John" received election through the efforts of the Soft Shell Democrats of the Fifth District to the House of Representatives of the United States. In his congressional career he appeared to much greater advantage than in the board of aldermen of New York City. During the first term he served on the committee on public expenditure and during the second on the important committee on ways and means. Mr. Kelly happened to be the sole member of the Roman Catholic Church in the Thirty-fourth Congress and defended his faith against anti-Catholic attacks with much warmth as well as effectiveness, if the speeches as recorded

* For an account of this coup, see the *New York Tribune*, June 2, 1886, 2:1-3.

⁷ *Proceedings of the Board of Aldermen of the City of New York*, LV, 4, 114, 306, 376, 391, 412.

⁸ *Ibid.*, LVII, 48-49.

can be used as indications.⁹ He had the ability to speak logically and could think on his feet. Also he spoke directly to the point and excelled the majority of his colleagues at repartee. He supported the state's rights group but exhibited a greater interest in a homestead bill which proposed to give out of the national domain free land to actual settlers.¹⁰ During the second term he acted as party leader on the floor and throughout both terms had the disposal of most of the patronage in New York City.

While in his second term as representative Mr. Kelly received election as sheriff of the county of New York. Therefore, he resigned his seat in Congress to assume the duties of the office in New York County. As sheriff he became unusually popular because of the introduction of certain reforms, such as presiding at the shrievalty trials in person. Although the law did not allow a sheriff to succeed himself in office, "Honest John" won a second election in 1864 after one term had intervened, a distinction not awarded anyone before this time.

The last political situation to interest Mr. Kelly before his day as boss came in the mayoralty election of 1868, when William M. Tweed ran his associate, A. Oakey Hall. The Democratic Union urged "Honest John" to become its candidate, and he consented to do so until ill health demanded that he withdraw from the field.

As a young man Mr. Kelly had married the daughter of an Irish immigrant by the name of McIlhargy and by this marriage had three children, Hugh, Mary, and Sarah. Unfortunately Mrs. Kelly contracted tuberculosis and died in 1866. Although it soon became apparent that the children would not be able to withstand the attacks of the same

⁹ Mr. Kelly delivered three famous addresses on this subject—"Politics in New York," "Civil and Religious Liberty," and "Americanism." See the *Congressional Globe*, 34 Cong., 1 sess., appendix, p. 1261.

¹⁰ *Congressional Globe*, 35 Cong., 1 sess., appendix, p. 389.

disease, the last child lingered until 1872. This prospect, together with the death of his wife, seems to account for his own breakdown in the fall of 1868 and the consequent withdrawal from the mayoralty race.¹¹

During the years 1868-1871 "Honest John" Kelly traveled extensively. He visited the Holy Land and covered much of Europe in the company of Vicar-General Quinn of New York City. They spent a considerable time at Rome, where Mr. Kelly became especially interested in the American College for training young men for ecclesiastical office and established a five thousand dollar bursary for the aid of needy students.¹²

In maturity Mr. Kelly maintained the excellent physical development and extraordinary strength of his young manhood. He averaged two hundred and thirty to two hundred and forty pounds in weight, stood five feet and ten inches in height, and possessed a somewhat large frame, which together with massive muscles saved him from an appearance of fleshiness. A face with prominent jaw, shaggy brows, stern mien, and piercing eyes foretold decision and assurance. A cold but unusually dominant personality gave him control of a body of followers that any political leader might envy.¹³

With a reputation for demanding absolute obedience Mr. Kelly had few weaknesses as a disciplinarian, although he showed some geniality to friends. Ordinarily he found it difficult to unbend, but above all other traits stubborn persistence, coupled with an insistence to have what he considered the right, stood out and caused his career to be decidedly stormy. Lacking in originality he yet attempted to

¹¹ See J. F. McLaughlin, *The Life and Times of John Kelly*, p. 253.

¹² *New York Tribune*, June 2, 1886, 2:1-3.

¹³ See the *New York Tribune*, August 18, 1883, 4:3.

master problems by a process which Horace Greeley characterized as "throttling them and tearing their vitals out."¹⁴

By way of contrast to his predecessor in New York politics "Honest John" possessed a keen sense of honesty. Even newspapers, such as the *New York Tribune* which consistently supported the anti-Tammany forces, admitted his honesty as well as his ability to resist the alluring rewards which certain interests offered for his favor.¹⁵ He maintained a simple home, realizing the foolishness of arousing popular opposition by a display of wealth, smoked moderately, and lived frugally.¹⁶ With all his opportunities to acquire a large fortune he left an estate conceded not to have passed the half a million mark.¹⁷

Gifts to charitable purposes totaled a large sum, but he gave with discrimination and favored religious institutions above others. Mr. Kelly apparently derived much pleasure from delivering lectures on such subjects, as "Early Jesuit Missionaries in North America," "The American Indian," and "Sisters of Charity." These he gave in most of the eastern cities of the United States, paying his own expenses, even to those incurred for traveling, and turning over to charitable causes in excess of fifty thousand dollars therefrom.¹⁸ A goodly number of young men received aid in preparing themselves for the priesthood, and Saint Patrick's Cathedral came into possession of a memorial window and six valuable paintings by the artist Galliardi.

As a churchman no political boss in an American city has been more prominent than Mr. Kelly. From the early days when he drove the priests around their parishes and defended

¹⁴ *New York Tribune*, June 2, 1886, 2:1.

¹⁵ *New York Tribune*, October 10, 1877, 4:3.

¹⁶ M. P. Breen, *Thirty Years of New York Politics*, p. 703.

¹⁷ See Gustavus Myers, *The History of Tammany Hall* (New York, 1917), p. 266, and the *New York Tribune*, June 2, 1886, 1:6. The surrogate's office in New York County lacks records of the Kelly estate.

¹⁸ See *New York Tribune*, June 7, 1879, 8:1.

the Cathedral from rioters, through the days in Congress when he set forth the merits of his faith in stirring apologetics, down to his last day he ever remained a staunch attendant and sympathizer with the Roman Church. Among his last utterances were words addressed to his wife to the effect that he wished to be known as a "faithful and firm Catholic."¹⁹

At the death of the first Mrs. Kelly and her children "Honest John" broke in health, for his family held a large place in his life. In 1876 he married a second wife, Miss Theresa Mullin, a young niece of Cardinal McCloskey. The second Mrs. Kelly, some twenty years her husband's junior, belonged to the family of Edward Mullin, a Washington merchant.²⁰ She, with a small son and daughter, survived Mr. Kelly.

Along in 1849 Mr. Kelly attained slight prominence in Tammany Hall by election to the general committee. Gradually coming more to the fore, he served in 1868 as chairman of the committee to superintend the construction of the new Tammany Wigwam. Nevertheless, in the same year the policy and increasing dominance of the Tweed Ring drove him to resign membership and for three years he remained without the Tammany fold. However, in 1871 when the Hall needed someone to restore its former good name, he returned from abroad and undertook the task. At the resignation of Mr. Tweed as grand sachem in 1872 he caused Augustus Schell to be elected to that place and associated with Mr. Schell as sachems Samuel J. Tilden, Horatio Seymour, and himself. Mr. Schell at once appointed a reorganization committee, at Mr. Kelly's suggestion, to make recommendations for re-establishing the Hall in its old place of influence. This committee advised that the general com-

¹⁹ *New York Tribune*, June 2, 1886, 1:6.

²⁰ *New York Tribune*, November 22, 1876, 2:1.

mittee be enlarged to approximately five hundred members, a new general committee be elected, a drive be made for new members in as much as so many had withdrawn during the ring scandals, and that the Hall should coöperate with other agencies working for municipal reform. A committee of seven, with Kelly as chairman, carried out these reforms in the political organization so successfully that about nineteen thousand new members applied for entrance. After the reconstruction had been thus far carried out, a committee of organization, corresponding to the present executive committee, to consist of a representative from each assembly district, took charge of the affairs of the Hall. Mr. Kelly not only acted as chairman of this committee but also became chairman of a sub-committee, known as the finance committee.²¹

With the reorganization practically complete Kelly at once began to contrive for the city offices and patronage. In 1872 he suggested Abraham Lawrence, a member of the Committee of Seventy, for mayor and for the other offices "men of ability and unimpeachable name."²² However, W. F. Havemeyer defeated Mr. Lawrence. This election caused strained relations between the Tammany leader and the mayor-elect, and when Mr. Kelly wished to have Richard Croker named marshal, Havemeyer charged him with having obtained the sum of \$84,482 fraudulently in connection with his term as sheriff. "Honest John" replied with a suit for libel, but Mr. Havemeyer died before the case came to trial.

The first notable achievement in public offices and patronage came in 1874, when the Tammany leader named W. H.

²¹ See the *New York Tribune*, September 15, 1881, 2:1, and February 2, 1882, 5:5; M. P. Breen, *Thirty Years of New York Politics*, p. 383; Gustavus Myers, *The History of Tammany Hall*, pp. 252-253; and New York State Legislature, *Testimony Taken by the Fassett Committee on Cities of the Senate* (5 vols., Albany, 1891), II, 1755.

²² Gustavus Myers, *The History of Tammany Hall*, p. 254.

Wickham as his candidate for mayor and elected him along with most of his ticket. In the state election of the same year Mr. Kelly threw his forces back of Samuel J. Tilden, who ran for governor. However, Tilden and Kelly split over matters of patronage within a few months and from 1875 remained consistent enemies.²³

Beginning with 1875 considerable opposition, which increased through the succeeding years, developed against the practically autocratic rule of Chief "Honest John." The Irving Hall Democracy set up as a rival of Tammany in city politics and caused Mr. Kelly to lose the election of 1875. The next year the factions fused and elected a compromise ticket with Smith Ely as mayor.²⁴ Before Mayor Wickham surrendered office, he appointed his mentor comptroller of New York City, a place which Mr. Kelly retained until ousted by Mayor Cooper in 1880. After some months in control of the finances of the city the *New York Tribune*, an opponent in politics, complimented him on his twelve million dollar reduction of the city debt and held him up as "a local financier worthy of all emulation."²⁵

At the Democratic national convention of 1876 John Kelly, with "bull-dog stubbornness," openly opposed the nomination of Tilden.²⁶ Although the convention had received Mr. Kelly with rousing cheers, it refused to hear his scathing denunciation of Tilden, and hissed him to a seat. After the nomination Tammany Hall supported Mr. Tilden but so indifferently as to eventually come in for considerable criticism from many quarters.²⁷ Soon after the convention Mr. Kelly happened to be in Washington and called on President Grant. During the course of the conversation the

²³ *New York Tribune*, September 10, 1879, 1:1.

²⁴ *New York Tribune*, November 8, 1876, 4:1.

²⁵ January 9, 1878, 4:5.

²⁶ *New York Tribune*, June 30, 1876, 1:1.

²⁷ See *New York Tribune*, July 3, 1876, 1:2.

President is said to have remarked rather dryly, "You and I, Mr. Kelly, were of the same opinion before the St. Louis nominations. We were both of the opinion that Tilden was unfit to be President."²⁸

In the state convention which met at Albany in 1878 "Honest John" perhaps reached the zenith of his power in state politics. He controlled his colleagues on the state committee by a majority of three and by a bargain with the St. Lawrence County delegation named the state ticket. When he appeared on the floor of the convention and especially when he made an address, the several delegations gave him a great deal of applause.²⁹ Augustus Schell, grand sachem of Tammany Society and Democratic national committee-man, made the race as Kelly's choice for mayor in 1878, but although nine aldermen, two congressmen, and twelve assemblymen received election from the Tammany ranks, the opposition candidates polled on an average approximately eighteen thousand more votes than the remaining Tammany candidates.³⁰

A storm, long threatening, broke with a vengeance in the state convention of 1879. The supporters of Mr. Tilden insisted on the renomination of Lucius Robinson, who had offended Tammany by the removal of the Tammany county clerk and police commissioners of New York County. Mr. Kelly appeared on the convention floor, received considerable applause, delivered an address, and accepted appointment to the committee on credentials. When the convention disregarded the threat that the Tammanyites would bolt unless some other than Lucius Robinson be nominated, he withdrew with his followers and set up a rival convention with David Dudley Field as chairman. This rump convention nomi-

²⁸ *New York Tribune*, July 18, 1876, 1:4.

²⁹ See *New York Tribune*, September 26, 1878, 1:1-3; September 27, 1878, 2:1; and September 28, 1878, 2:1.

³⁰ *New York Tribune*, November 6, 1878.

nated "Honest John" for governor.³¹ Although he announced at once that he ran only to encompass the defeat of Robinson and had no idea of being elected, he carried on a vigorous campaign all over New York State and caused the election of the Republican candidate.³²

It was generally conceded that the only hope for electing a Democratic ticket in the municipal election of 1880 and again in 1882 lay in a fusion with Irving Hall. Hence in 1880 Mr. Kelly chose W. R. Grace from the mayoralty possibilities submitted by Irving Hall and in 1882 suggested the name of Franklin Edson, who proved acceptable to Irving Hall and to a new Democratic organization, the New York County Democracy.³³ Tammany maintained its rump state convention in 1880 and had therein representatives from about three-fourths of the counties. The convention made overtures to the regular convention, but the Tildenites refused to heed them.³⁴ All through the months of irregularity predictions of the Tammany boss's political death poured from within the Hall and more especially from without. Nevertheless, Mr. Kelly maintained the confidence of the leaders, fought vigorously by means of two newspapers which he controlled, *The Evening Express* and *The Star*, and at last regained firmer ground.³⁵

The state legislature of 1882 could accomplish little without the support of "Honest John," for although he had but few representatives therein, they happened to hold the balance of power. After a two month's deadlock over the matter of organization, he united with the Republicans and

³¹ For an account of both conventions, see *New York Tribune*, September 11, 1879, pp. 1, 5, and September 12, 1879, 5:1-4.

³² For the campaign, see the New York press for October, 1879. See also *New York Tribune*, November 6, 1879, 1:4, and November 24, 1879, 2:1.

³³ *New York Tribune*, October 15, 1882, 1:6.

³⁴ See *New York Tribune*, April 21, 1880, 1:1.

³⁵ *New York Tribune*, April 14, 1880, 8:5.

forced the Tildenites to step down from their anticipated control. In spite of the few representatives, he gained control of such important committees as the senate committee on cities, the senate committee on commerce and navigation, and the senate committee on internal affairs. The victory in the legislature paved the way for recognition by the regular state convention in 1882.³⁶

Mayor Edward Cooper proved a sore disappointment to Mr. Kelly, for he not only refused to coöperate but publicly turned the leader out of his office as comptroller.³⁷ Mayor W. R. Grace did little better from the viewpoint of the boss and went to such lengths in opposing his patron that "Honest John" finally felt impelled to ask his expulsion from the state committee.³⁸ One of the trials of every leader has been the promising candidate who after election has turned against the master hand and proved recalcitrant. Mr. Kelly received his due share of such sorrows and perhaps an additional share. Not only did Mayor Grace turn out to be sour grapes, but Governors Tilden and Cleveland, from whom at least small favors might have been expected, thrust out the cold shoulder. However, such misfortune appears more serious than it actually was, for "Honest John" always had control of considerable patronage outside the province of either mayor or governor. Thus in 1883, a relatively lean year, he had at his disposal some ten thousand places of one kind or another with a pay roll approximating ten million dollars.³⁹

Taken as a whole, the year 1884, the last to command full attention from Mr. Kelly, turned out badly. In the first place the election of that year broke an ambition which the

³⁶ See the *New York Tribune*, January 3, 1882, 1:4; February 21, 1882, 2:1; February 22, 1882, 2:1; and October 24, 1882, 4:2.

³⁷ *New York Tribune*, September 27, 1880, 1:2.

³⁸ *New York Tribune*, October 30, 1882, 1:5.

³⁹ *New York Tribune*, January 21, 1883, 6:4.

boss had cherished for many years—the making of Hugh Grant mayor. Then, although the question as to whether the state convention would seat the Tammany delegation finally settled itself fairly well, nevertheless, he received only half of the seats, and his rivals, the County Democrats, occupied the other half.⁴⁰ Finally Grover Cleveland, whom he regarded as despicable, received the presidential nomination in spite of all his personal opposition as well as that of Tammany Hall. However, on the brink of a serious illness and broken by disappointment, he still showed no uncertain elements of strength, for when members of the board of aldermen accepted bribes for the passage of the Broadway railway franchise, he passed out the order that not one of them should be reelected, and not one was.

After the presidential election of 1884 “Honest John” had a nervous breakdown and physical prostration and from that time gradually weakened until his death on June 1, 1886. Since 1875 he had been the target of much press criticism, but it did not appear to bother him until this illness, when caricatures appearing in the papers greatly aggravated his unrest. During the seventeen months of illness, which practically confined him to bed, he nominally retained his place as leader of Tammany Hall and for a part of the time actively directed the organization. However, with the iron hand relaxed certain of the underlings proved restive, and hence actual authority passed gradually to Richard Croker, his principal henchman. The ingratitude of old favorites toward the end apparently disappointed Mr. Kelly to such an extent that he found all associations with former political intimates distasteful.

It may be said that Mr. Kelly failed to bring Tammany to the position of prominence he had in mind; that was reserved for his successors. His own contribution lay more

⁴⁰ *New York Tribune*, June 18, 1884, and June 20, 1884.

along solid but unspectacular lines. By unceasing labor he raised the standard of membership and the type of methods much higher than they had been before, attracting the better class of Democrats to the Hall and carrying on the work of the organization without the corruption of the ballot or the speculation from the public treasury that had characterized his predecessor. At the same time he succeeded fairly well at the polls, proved invincible in conflict with other leaders and factions, and left the Hall far stronger than he had found it.

CHAPTER V

RICHARD CROKER

Embarking under the Tweed regime as court officer, alderman, and collector of arrears in personal taxes, Richard Croker safely weathered the dark days of that particular house, became the most powerful henchman of "Honest John" Kelly, and finally succeeded the latter as boss of Tammany Hall. After two withering defeats he allowed the leadership to pass to Charles F. Murphy but occupied a role as critic until 1922. Altogether, therefore, Mr. Croker achieved the feat of personal association with every one of the great overlords of New York City and succeeded in stretching himself over the history of Tammany Hall for well on to sixty years.

Dick Croker was born on November 24, 1843, at Blackrock, County Cork, Ireland. He sprang from a line of ancestors which had emigrated to the isle from other climes. On the paternal side the family had come out from England during the days of Cromwell. It apparently had belonged to the middle class in circumstances, although it claimed a governor of Bermuda, a member of parliament, and a major of the British army as members. The mother traced her family line to Scotland.¹ During Richard's third year the family made another emigration—this time to the United States. It seems that they expected to settle in the middle west, but after living in Cincinnati, Ohio, and in Covington, Kentucky, for a short time they decided to return to New York City.

Eyre Coot Croker, Dick's father, lies so well enshrouded in mystery that it is difficult to distinguish the actual from

¹For information concerning the Croker stock, see the *New York Times*, April 4, 1920, p. 2, April 30, 1922, 1:1, and May 1, 1922, pp. 1, 17; and Alfred H. Lewis, *Richard Croker* (New York, 1901), pp. 20-30.



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RICHARD CROKER

the legendary. He has been described as "a graduate of Trinity College, Ireland," "a veterinary surgeon," "a civil engineer," "a captain under General Sickles during the Civil War," "an officer in the British army," "a blacksmith," "a squatter," and the "general purchasing agent for the Harlem Railroad." Whatever may have been his occupation and qualifications, he comes into record in 1875 as the "superintendent of stables at the penitentiary on Blackwell's Island."² The Crokers had a good-sized family, variously estimated at from seven to eleven. However, in 1920 only Mrs. W. T. Jenkins, wife of the sometime health officer of the Port of New York, and Richard remained alive out of the family. The early Croker residence appears to have been in what is now a part of Central Park and has been described as "a squatter's shanty."³

Dick's formal education terminated with three or four years in the public schools. As a youth he possessed an undersized body, which, nevertheless, was so well developed and wiry that he soon established a considerable reputation among his fellows as a fighter. Along about his fifteenth year he suddenly shot up in size and by "knocking out" "Red" Haskins, Pat Kelly, and Dickie Lynch, renowned local pugilists, won such fame for valor that the Fourth Avenue Tunnel gang chose him leader.

At the age of thirteen years young Croker became an apprentice in the Harlem Railroad shops to learn the trade of machinist. He worked in these shops until nineteen years of age, mastered his trade, and then took a job as machinist in the Brooklyn marine shops for six or seven months. Early in his twenties he accepted his first job on the public payroll,

² New York State Legislature, *Report of the Senate Committee to Investigate the Several Departments of the Government in the City and County of New York* (Albany, 1876), p. 101.

³ Gustavus Myers, "Boss Croker," *National Review*, XXXVIII (1901-2), 61.

signing as engineer on fire steamer 28 which patrolled a portion of New York harbor. A little later in 1867 he secured an appointment at a salary of \$1,200 per year to a post in the court of Judge George G. Barnard, later to be impeached in connection with the Tweed scandals. This court place seems to have been largely honorary except for the pay attached, for it does not appear that Croker attended the sessions.⁴

Associations with the Fourth Avenue Tunnel gang led to early political activity, for, with physical force frequently deciding elections, Croker, with his own mighty fist backed by the combined muscle of the gang, climbed rapidly to the fore. In 1868, as a Young Democrat, he made a campaign in the Eighteenth District for election to the board of aldermen and won election as well as a re-election in the next year, although the Tweed charter of 1870 legislated the second term to a close after it had run some five months. A newspaper item of October 13, 1868, records a trip to Philadelphia made by "a hundred and fifty metropolitan bandits under the notorious Dick Croker, all well-armed and spoiling for a fight" for the purpose of aiding brother Democrats.⁵

Proceedings of the board of aldermen give the impression that Mr. Croker rather stood out among the members, for when few others attended the sessions, he answered to the roll call faithfully. His frequent resolutions had mainly to do with such matters as paving, flagging, street lighting, and awarding newspaper contracts to print the public notices.⁶

Sometime before losing the office of alderman Croker had made friends with the Tweed Ring, in spite of his Young

⁴ See Croker's testimony in New York State Legislature, *Testimony Taken Before the Senate Committee on Cities Pursuant to Resolution Adopted January 20, 1890* (5 vols., Albany, 1891), II, 1706-8.

⁵ J. D. Townsend, *New York in Bondage* (New York, 1901), p. 158.

⁶ *Proceedings of the Board of Aldermen of the City of New York*, CXVIII, 10, 118, 138, 139, 141, 174, 178, 245, 355, 357, 358, 359, 360, 395.

Democratic past, and soon after June, 1870, entered the office of Comptroller "Slippery Dick" Connolly as collector of arrears in personal taxes. Occupying this position for a year and a half he went out when the exposures in the office of the auditor finally caused the downfall of the ring. In 1872 records show that he received \$2,500 for opening certain streets.⁷ Shortly after "Honest John" Kelly took over the task of reorganizing Tammany Hall, he appears to have recognized Croker in spite of his past associations, and when W. F. Havemeyer won election as mayor of the city, he asked that Croker be appointed marshal. Mayor Havemeyer, incensed at the proposal, accused Kelly of rendering fraudulent bills in connection with his terms as sheriff and refused to appoint Croker.

The office of coroner paid handsomely in the seventies of the last century; therefore, Croker set his bag for the office and in 1873 received election for a term of three years. The first official act of the coroners of 1873 took the form of the following resolution: "Whereas, for viewing each dead body and holding an inquest we can receive but ten dollars, and whereas, should we deem a jury necessary we can have one, and if we do call a jury, we can receive fifteen dollars in each case, instead of ten dollars; now, therefore, we give formal notice that in every case we may have we deem a jury necessary to assist us to make an additional charge of five dollars against the city and county of New York."⁸ When the New York State Senate Investigating Committee summoned Mr. Croker before it in 1876, it asked him to tell what his duties as coroner were. He replied somewhat ambiguously, "The duties of a coroner is to inquire how and what manner in behalf of the dead, and in what way, and into all the circum-

⁷ *New York Tribune*, March 8, 1872.

⁸ New York State Legislature, *Report of the Senate Committee to Investigate the Several Departments of the Government in the City and County of New York*, p. 57.

stances connected with the person who may be dead; that is, that may be reported to the office as coroners' cases."⁹ After due investigation the committee reported that, although each coroner received from the public about fourteen thousand dollars per year, "It is the belief of the Committee that no one of them could, in a private capacity, earn one-third the amount they receive for official services, which when performed, are discharged in so incompetent, extravagant, and illegal a manner as to be wholly without benefit to the public."¹⁰ After Croker's favorite juror, one McDonald, who appeared in eighty-nine coroner's cases, had received sentence of one year to the state prison for assaulting the dead body of a woman in the morgue which he kept, Coroner Croker testified that he "regarded him as a proper person to sit upon a coroner's jury" as well as "an unusually intelligent man."¹¹

A near tragedy overtook Dick Croker on election morning of 1874 as he and some followers encountered James O'Brien and henchmen at the corner of Thirty-fourth Street and Second Avenue. Just as the two groups met, John McKenna, an O'Brien man, fell mortally wounded from a pistol shot. After Croker had been accused of firing the fatal shot, a grand jury returned an indictment against him charging first degree murder, and, although defended by John R. Fellows and George W. Wingate, the trial jury stood six for conviction and six for acquittal after seventeen hours of deliberation. In 1876 the prosecuting attorney finally entered a *nolle prosequi* in the case.¹²

In spite of the withering recommendation of the senate committee and the charges in connection with the death of

⁹ New York State Legislature, *Report of the Senate Committee to Investigate the Several Departments of the Government in the City of New York*, p. 57.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 60.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 243-244.

¹² For an account of this trial, see John D. Townsend, *New York in Bondage*, pp. 159-160.

John McKenna, Croker re-elected himself as coroner in 1876. However, his plurality of approximately seven thousand votes compared unfavorably with Mayor Ely's plurality of more than fifty thousand votes, and the *New York Tribune* branded him a "bad odor to the party."¹³ In 1880 Croker removed to White Plains and spent three years of semi-retirement from politics in the ice business. But when Mayor Edson promised an appointment as fire commissioner, if he would win a seat on the board of aldermen and turn it over to a friend of the mayor, Mr. Croker emerged from the ice business, won the seat in 1883, resigned the office, and became fire commissioner at once. His last public office, that of city chamberlain, came in 1889 after he had given up the office of fire commissioner. On account of "ill health" he held this office only eleven months and closed his career as office holder. Altogether, as he testified before the Fassett Committee of the New York senate, after he gave up his trade as machinist in 1867, his business centered "generally in politics."¹⁴

Marrying first in 1873, Mr. Croker became the father of nine children, three of whom died at early ages.¹⁵ He lived with his first wife until 1897, separated, and then took up residence apart through the years until her death in 1914. Mrs. Croker died in Austria shortly after the war broke out and left an estate valued at \$320,000.¹⁶ The children attained some degree of prominence in various circles. A daughter married Count Louis San Martini of Naples. Richard, Junior, and Frank H. studied at Brown University and at the Westinghouse Electrical shops. Richard then

¹³ *New York Tribune*, November 9, 1876.

¹⁴ New York State Legislature, *Testimony Taken Before the Senate Committee on Cities Pursuant to Resolution Adopted January 20, 1890*, II, 1707.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, II, 1767.

¹⁶ *New York Times*, May 9, 1922.

went on to law school at Cornell, became a member of Psi Upsilon fraternity, and entered business. He became interested in the Trojan Film Company, Roebling Construction Company, and Atlantic Coast Realty Company. Frank H. Croker owned seventeen thousand dollars worth of stock in the Roebling Construction Company, as well as serving as its secretary, and held directorships in the Atlantic Coast Realty Company and the Casualty Company of America. He played football and baseball in college, won the amateur record for automobile racing at Empire City, and established a long distance record in a motor boat. In 1905 his automobile, overturning in Florida, killed him. Herbert, a younger son, died the same year from narcotic poisoning, apparently induced from opium, on a Santa Fe train in Kansas.¹⁷

During the early years of youth Dick Croker overcame the handicap of an undersized body by his agility. Later he grew in heft and at the age of sixty years weighed one hundred and eighty-five pounds and stood five feet and seven inches in height. Altogether he had an almost perfect build for a man who found use for his fists. His general stockiness, broad shoulders, and hard arms made him a dangerous adversary as well as one who could take severe blows with slight personal injury. Perhaps even more than sturdiness, smoldering eyes, a threatening jaw, and close-clipped beard and whiskers suggested the fighter. From young manhood Croker had a fondness for natty dress, and while by no means a dandy, his broadcloth or tweed always carried an atmosphere of quality. On rare occasions he made public

¹⁷ For information concerning the Croker children and their activities, see the *New York Tribune*, December 12, 1899, October 21, 1900, and January 22, 1905; *London Times*, May 1, 1922, 21c; *Directory of Directors of the City of New York, 1915-1916* (New York, 1915), p. 148, and *ibid.*, 1919-1920 (New York, 1919), p. 167; and *New York Times*, April 30, 1922, 1:1.

addresses in a somewhat harsh voice.¹⁸ The rest of the time he maintained a sullen silence which stood out as one of his dominant traits.¹⁹

From days at school until death Mr. Croker preferred activity to books. He found difficulty in speaking and even in writing grammatically, although he took pride in answering every one of his seven hundred weekly letters that required an answer and once remarked that were he to mention what he considered most to his credit, it would be that "every man, rich or poor, small or great, who wanted to see me, did see me and was listened to."²⁰ He could feign with skill, did not consider it below his dignity to employ all manner of cunning, and in all probability profited to a certain extent from the use of questionable devices. Yet he would not resort to flattery, ordinarily kept his word, and maintained a good personal morality. He could "smell changes" in the public mind with surprising accuracy. Sometime Mayor David A. Boody of Brooklyn characterized him as "a strong man in character and politics" with a "wide vision."²¹ On the whole irritable and excitable he did not like to work strenuously and, therefore, suffered defeats not otherwise necessary.

The system by which Mr. Croker carried on the organization placed Richard Croker head and shoulders and perhaps even feet above all others. He "hogged" all the good things and left the tailings to his underlings who occupied places more like slaves than helpers. Militarism with all of its harshness characterized his system from top to bottom.

¹⁸ For accounts of several of these addresses, see the *New York Tribune*, January 14, 1897, October 20, 1898, 2:4, and October 30, 1898, 4:5.

¹⁹ For descriptions of Mr. Croker's appearance, see A. H. Lewis, *Richard Croker*, pp. 70-80, and E. J. Edwards, "Richard Croker as 'Boss' of Tammany," *McClure's Magazine*, V (1895), 543.

²⁰ A. H. Lewis, *Richard Croker*, p. 98.

²¹ Words taken from an interview with Mr. David A. Boody in 1926.

Nevertheless, to a casual observer as well as to a few intimates and protégés he literally exuded amiability.²²

Among the political bosses who have amassed sizable fortunes Mr. Croker must be given a place. Some of his wealth resulted no doubt from his own ability, but the larger part came from his position in Tammany Hall. When he became chief, according to the expert testimony of his friend, Hugh Grant, sometime mayor of New York City, he was very poor indeed.²³ In 1895 he swore that his property, aside from real estate, subject to taxation amounted to nothing.²⁴ Needless to say he soon left poverty behind, after 1895 if not before. In 1892 he had entered the real estate field as a partner of Peter F. Meyer and speedily caused the court sales to be moved to the Meyer auction rooms. In the Mazet investigation Mr. Croker admitted that he didn't "do much of the real estate business—except to give the benefit of his name"; yet he placed his annual returns from the venture at from \$25,000 to \$30,000.²⁵

Appearing before the Mazet Committee of the New York assembly, Mr. Croker mentioned among his interests on Wall Street 150 shares of Consolidated Ice stock, 120 shares of Knickerbocker-Philadelphia Ice stock, 300 shares of International Air and Power stock, stock in the New Amsterdam Gas Company, and stock in the United States Fidelity and Guarantee Company.²⁶ The Auto-Truck Com-

²² For Croker's own militaristic theory, see his article in the *North American Review*, CLIV (1892), 225. See also John D. Townsend, *New York in Bondage*, p. 167, quoting the *Wine and Spirits Gazette*.

²³ New York State Legislature, *Testimony Taken Before the Senate Committee on Cities Pursuant to a Resolution Adopted January 20, 1890*, I, 763.

²⁴ New York State Legislature, *Report of the Special Assembly Committee to Investigate the Public Offices and Departments of the City of New York and of the Counties Included Therein* (5 vols., Albany, 1900), I, 719.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, I, 427, 439, 528-529.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, I, 417, 418, 428, 536, 546.

pany, capitalized at ten million dollars, a pioneer in the automobile industry, greatly interested Mr. Croker and made him chairman of its executive committee. As chairman of the finance committee of Tammany Hall he testified before the Mazet Committee that he received all political contributions and assessments but kept no account of them.²⁷ In as much as various judges testified before the same Committee that they had paid \$10,000 for their nominations and Mr. Croker admitted that they had donated seven or eight thousand dollars, it is not impossible that he profited from such monies personally.²⁸ At any rate he replied to the question, "Then you are working for your own pocket, are you not?" "All the time; the same as you."²⁹ The Lexow Committee brought money paid by saloons, gambling and pool joints, and houses of the underworld dangerously near the door of the Tammany boss, as well as money paid by members of the police force for their jobs and promotions; yet it failed to do more than imply that he received a share of the spoils.³⁰ At his death the estate had an appraised value of more than two million dollars.³¹ Taking into account that Mr. Croker had transferred much property to his wife prior to his death, the total amount of his wealth must have mounted high. Palm Beach waterfront alone was appraised at ten million dollars in 1925.³²

Unlike many bosses Mr. Croker clung to his material goods with closed fists. Sometimes he gave to charitable enterprises, as for example, when he donated five thousand

²⁷ *Ibid.*, I, 439.

²⁸ For the testimony, see *ibid.*, I, 342, 383.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, I, 353.

³⁰ New York State Legislature, *Report and Proceedings of the Senate Committee to Investigate the Police Department of the City of New York* (5 vols., Albany, 1895), *passim*.

³¹ *New York Times*, May 1, 1922.

³² See the *New York Times*, June 28, 1927. The Palm Beach property shrank from ten to three million dollars during 1925-1927.

dollars as a memorial to his son Frank H. However, on the whole he guarded his possessions against any inroads and preferred to move that the treasurer of Tammany Hall be instructed to draw a check for \$20,000 to aid the suffering Cubans or \$20,000 for the relief of the poor in New York City.³³ He remained a fairly staunch churchman in the Roman Catholic Church, attending services as a rule and erecting a private chapel on the grounds of his Irish estate "Glencairn."

Swimming, boxing, and sports of that type pleased Richard Croker, especially during his younger days. He had a penchant for blooded dogs and is said to have established a record by paying \$10,000 for his imported bulldog "Rodney Stone."³⁴ Horse racing always occupied a place at the very center of his heart. In 1892 he purchased a ranch near Richfield Springs and set about stocking it with fine horses, buying among other animals a half interest in "Belle Meade," one of the famous studs of the United States, at \$250,000. Altogether Mr. Croker spent considerably more than half a million dollars for horses and equipment, but the horses probably cleared more than that amount for their owner. In the two years 1892-1893 they won more than \$200,000, and they had just got under way.³⁵ Beginning with 1895 Croker sent horses to England to compete on the turf, looking forward to the time when he might try for the famous Newmarket Derby. Finally in 1905 a colt "Orby," which he had bred, reached the age when it could run, and Mr. Croker began to train it for the great event. The stewards of the jockey club barred him from using the track to

³³ *New York Tribune*, November 20, 1897, 2:4, and February 27, 1905, 9:2.

³⁴ A. P. Terhune, "Want To Buy a Dog," *Saturday Evening Post*, July 9, 1927, p. 86.

³⁵ *New York Tribune*, March 28, 1893, 10:1; June 10, 1894, 3:1; November 11, 1894, 1:4.

train his horse, presumably on account of political associations, and caused him to resolve that he would never become a British citizen.³⁶ Undaunted he built his own track and went to work in earnest. In 1907 "Orby" won the Derby in the presence of King Edward, the Prince and Princess of Wales, Grand Duke Michael of Russia, and other celebrities, although the betting ran 100 to 9 against him. In addition to the prize of \$32,500 "Orby" won enough in stakes to bring the total winnings to a quarter of a million dollars and caused Mr. Croker to remark, "I have attained the ambition of my life."³⁷ To a certain extent, however, the victory brought humiliation in its wake, because King Edward failed to invite Mr. Croker to the famed Derby dinner, an unprecedented slight in all the Newmarket annals. Not satisfied with the English Derby "Orby" was entered in the races at Boldoyle and Curragh and won the Irish Derby. Then Dublin extended an honor by making Croker a freeman of the city.³⁸ In 1916 the Tammany ex-chieftain disposed of most of his horses, retaining only "Orby" for whom a special tomb had been planned at "Glencairn" not far from the elaborate structure that was to house the remains of his master.

During the extended illness of "Honest John" Kelly, Croker gradually, and not always fairly according to Mr. Kelly, took over more and more authority in the management of the Hall. But when Mr. Kelly died, the district leaders announced that there would be no more bosses of the organization.³⁹ However, Mr. Croker soon won the support of seventeen of the leaders and caused himself to be chosen chairman of the finance committee. In 1886 he

³⁶ *New York Tribune*, January 16, 1905, 9:2.

³⁷ *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 7, 1907, p. 7.

³⁸ *London Times*, May 1, 1922, 21c.

³⁹ See Gustavus Myers, "Boss Croker," *National Review*, XXXVIII (1901-1902), 65.

elected Abram S. Hewitt, also popular with the County Democrats, as mayor against Henry George and Theodore Roosevelt. Two years later he chose Hugh Grant to lead the municipal ticket and elected him along with practically all the other Tammany candidates.

The defeat of the County Democrats in 1888 revealed to Tammany its real strength and gave it confidence to believe that it need no longer consult its rivals, Irving Hall and the County Democracy. Therefore, when again in 1890 it elected Hugh Grant mayor in spite of all the accusations made by enemies, the rivals disappeared, leaving Tammany Hall with a clear field to enjoy complete control of the city. In 1892 Mr. Croker put up Thomas F. Gilroy to lead the ticket and again won a decisive victory in practically every case. The national Democratic conference, composed of about twenty-five leaders from various parts of the United States, made the Tammany leader a member after the Cleveland triumph, and the next year he went to Washington to attend the inaugural ball. But all told Croker received slight coöperation from the Cleveland administration.

Beginning in 1893 Charles Parkhurst, a prominent New York clergyman, waged a more or less sensational warfare against the evil conditions prevailing in New York City by going himself to investigate and publishing accounts of what he saw.⁴⁰ Much of the onus for the disgraceful situation ultimately came to rest on the broad back of Mr. Croker, and he finally issued an order that for a time closed the various joints more tightly than they perhaps had ever been closed in the history of the city.⁴¹ Four years after the

⁴⁰ *New York Tribune*, December 17, 1893, 3:2. See also Parkhurst's book, *My Forty Years in New York* (New York, 1923).

⁴¹ See the *New York Tribune*, December 17, 1893, 3:2, and New York Legislature, *Report and Proceedings of the Senate Committee Appointed to Investigate the Police Department of the City of New York*, IV, 3767-3777.

Fassett Committee had completed its work, another investigating committee descended from Albany to look over the police department. Mr. Croker apparently feared the Lexow Committee, for he resigned the leadership almost immediately and without notice departed for Europe on the ground that illness compelled a complete rest.⁴²

By summoning liquor dealers, red light keepers, and police officials to testify, the Lexow Committee uncovered a great mass of corruption which by implication drew in Tammany Hall and its boss.⁴³ In the 1894 municipal election Tammany not only failed to elect Hugh Grant as mayor but lost practically every place in the city government. Mr. Croker explained the fiasco thus, "The turf is like politics and both are like a ship plying between two ports and patronized by the public. If the ship makes cruise after cruise for a long time without being overhauled and inspected carefully, she is sure to become unpopular with the traveling public, as barnacles and other submarine growths cause her bottom to become foul. She loses her speed and patronage, so that if her boilers do not blow up, the ship's owners are forced to send her to the drydocks for repairs, as the public have lost confidence in both the ship and her crew."⁴⁴

Between 1894 and 1899 Mr. Croker flitted across the Atlantic at frequent intervals. Altogether he made six trips to Europe during the period and spent two years, four months, and twenty-five days of the time outside of the United States. In 1896 Tammany gave him a complimentary dinner at the Hotel Savoy, with plates at forty dollars each, and presented him with a great cup costing \$2,000.⁴⁵

⁴² *New York Tribune*, June 10, 1894.

⁴³ See the *Report and Proceedings* (5 vols., Albany, 1895), *passim*.

⁴⁴ *New York Tribune*, November 11, 1894, 1:4.

⁴⁵ For an account of the dinner, see the *New York Tribune*, February 9, 1896, 8:2.

The next year he openly resumed the leadership and won a complete victory.

State politics concerned Mr. Croker to only a fair extent, largely because of the power exercised by other Democrats in that sphere. In 1898 he favored biennial sessions of the state legislature in as much as the "fewer sessions of that body there are, the better off are the people of New York City."⁴⁶ Nevertheless, in the same year he addressed the executive committee of Tammany Hall to the effect that, "we should advise our representatives in Albany to confer with their Democratic associates from other parts of the state, so that for all the bills so far introduced which will give our citizens cheaper gas, cheaper telephone rates, cheaper coal, a liberal and reasonable excise law, and the extension of home rule to every part of the State, they may vote as a unit."⁴⁷ Again in 1898 he ordered the state senators from the Tammany ranks to absent themselves from the Democratic dinner, "because their place was in Albany at their duty" and "we expect them to stand by party measures."⁴⁸ Ex-Mayor David A. Boody told of an experience with Croker at a state convention in the later nineties. Mr. Boody, active in financial circles as well as in politics, received assignment to the committee on resolutions of the convention and found that all except two of his colleagues favored a free silver plank. Realizing that such a stand would alienate many monied Democrats, he went to Croker and informed him that such a plank would mean the loss of 30,000 votes in Brooklyn alone. Croker called Bourke

⁴⁶ Croker's complete statement may be found in the *New York Tribune*, February 27, 1898, 7:3.

⁴⁷ For a more extended report of this address, see the *New York Tribune*, February 27, 1898, 7:3.

⁴⁸ See the New York State Legislature, *Report of the Special Assembly Committee Appointed to Investigate the Public Offices and Departments of the City of New York and the Counties Therein Included*, I, 454-455.

Cochran, ordered the silver plank deleted, and the matter ended.⁴⁹

The Mazet Committee of the New York assembly, in its investigation of New York City affairs, brought to light evidence by no means complimentary to Mr. Croker. As a result he appeared before the Tammany executive committee with the statement, "not one dollar comes into my possession from land-lords of poolrooms and houses of ill-fame; and if any of you gentlemen is collecting from any of these people, you had better get out of the organization. It has no use for you. You are a disgrace to it. The organization can't and won't stand for any such thing."⁵⁰ The Committee summoned the Tammany boss before it, and in answering the Committee's questions he made some interesting comments on his own career and on politics in general. Once he vaingloriously declared, "I am the leader of the party and I acknowledge it" and again admitted that "there are others who have their influences (in New York City), but probably none to such an extent as me."⁵¹ Finally he made it plain that he believed that "to the party belong the spoils. . . . We win and we expect everyone to stand by us."⁵² The Committee learned that fifteen of the district leaders held important offices in the city and county government and that altogether the boss had about forty thousand places at his disposal by way of patronage.⁵³

In addition to the Mazet findings Mayor Van Wyck became rather deeply involved in an alleged conspiracy between the dock department and the ice trust. This, of course, caused much critical publicity. Altogether, the Tammany

⁴⁹ Available through the courtesy of Mr. Boody.

⁵⁰ *New York Tribune*, November 16, 1900, 1:4.

⁵¹ New York State Legislature, *Report of the Special Assembly Committee Appointed to Investigate the Public Offices and Departments of the City of New York and the Counties Therein Included*, I, 326, 331.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 353.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, II, 2194, 2195, and IV, 4112.

prospects did not look very bright for the municipal election of 1901. The returns, as a matter of fact, registered a severe beating for Tammany which Mr. Croker explained thus, "the people wanted a change."⁵⁴ After selecting Lewis Nixon to carry on the work of the organization, Croker departed late in 1901 for across the seas with the farewell of Mark Twain ringing in his ears, "And last but not least, there is Croker. He can now go back to England. We can spare him here. Yes, farewell to Croker forever, the Baron of Wantage, the last and I daresay the least desirable addition to English nobility."⁵⁵

There seems to be little evidence that Mr. Croker intended to say farewell to Tammany forever when he left in 1901. Indeed it is quite likely that he planned to resume command in balmier days, as he had done before on occasions. However, Charles F. Murphy so securely established himself as boss that the executive committee issued the ultimatum, "Let it be stated once and for all that Richard Croker is not the leader in or of Tammany Hall, and that he will never again be that leader. . . . He has gone out and shall not return."⁵⁶ Thereupon, Dick Croker had to content himself with sending back stinging taunts whenever Tammany met defeat under "Commissioner" Murphy. In 1906 he is said to have announced, "I am finished with American politics and would not dream of asking a favor of Murphy."⁵⁷ Again in 1914 he sent word that Tammany "will never be able to win while Murphy leads it, never in the world."⁵⁸

After 1902 Mr. Croker divided his time between an estate at Palm Beach, Florida, known as the "Wigwam,"

⁵⁴ *New York Tribune*, November 6, 1901.

⁵⁵ *New York Tribune*, November 7, 1901, 3:3.

⁵⁶ *New York Tribune*, June 12, 1902, 1:2.

⁵⁷ *New York Times*, March 25, 1927.

⁵⁸ *New York Times*, April 11, 1914, 1:4.

and his English "Wantage," and later an Irish estate with its magnificent castle "Glencairn." At the 1900 Democratic national convention he had made the acquaintance of Kotaw Koluntuchy, a member of the Cherokee Indian tribe of Oklahoma. Within a few months of the death of the first Mrs. Croker in 1914 he married this Indian princess who happened to be some thirty years his junior. The second Mrs. Croker claimed descent from Lord Montgomerie, Earl of Eglinton, and had an uncle in the Congress of the United States. She had attended Tahlequah Seminary and the University of Chicago and studied voice under Doctor Curry of Boston, Oscar Saenger of New York, and Frederick Haywood, also of New York.⁵⁹

Until 1916 Mr. Croker spent much of his time at the race track, but in that year he disposed of his horses and centered attention on the estate near Dublin, known as "Glencairn." His last years bore a tragic tinge on account of the almost continuous quarrels with his children who sought to have a guardian appointed on the ground that he was unable to take care of his property. Even after his death at "Glencairn" in April, 1922, the children continued until 1929 to press litigation to secure the property by every hook and crook of legal technicality.⁶⁰

When Richard Croker relinquished the helm of the good ship "Tammany" in 1902, he left a disquisition which throws some light on his ideals as well as on the position he occupied. Among other things he said:

This role of leader isn't a bed of roses. It is too much for me. No man can stand it as long as I have. I must have rest. It has been all work and no pleasure with me. If a man be-

⁵⁹ For additional information in regard to the second Mrs. Croker, see the *New York Times*, April 4, 1920, 2:1, and May 1, 1922, pp. 1, 17.

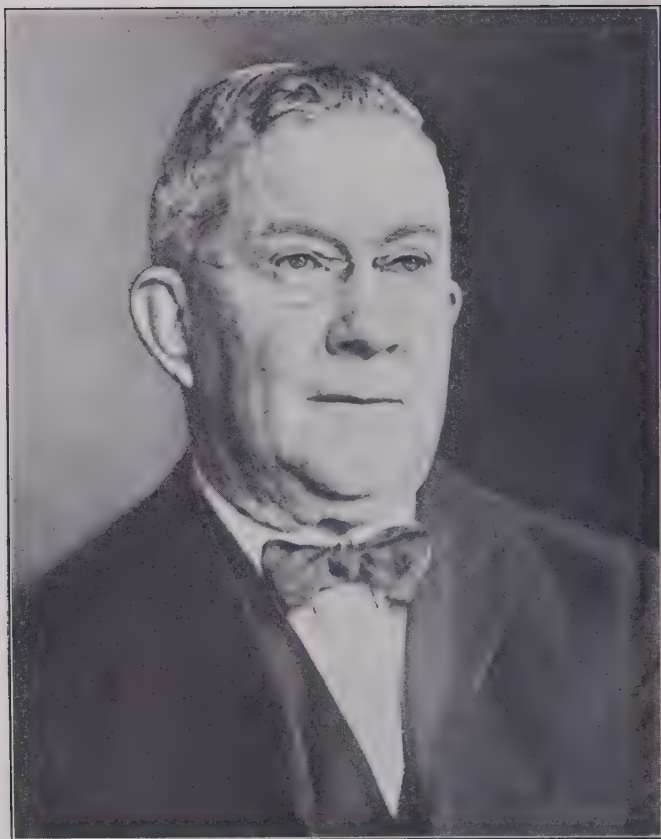
⁶⁰ See *New York Times*, May 9, 1922, and September 26, 1925, 24:1. The latest and apparently final angle of the litigation may be got from the *New York Times*, September 15, 1929, p. 7.

comes leader of Tammany, he might as well give up the idea for all time of having fun. If the people knew what I have undergone as leader of Tammany Hall, they would not blame me for wanting rest in England once in a while. There is no rest for me in New York or in any place in this country. If I go to New Jersey, New England, or California, the papers instruct their representatives to camp around the house in which I am staying. I tell you it is a trying job. It is nice for the men who have nothing to do but look after fat offices and hold them down. It is the man who has to handle all the troubles of the organization who gets no sleep. . . . A leader in Tammany isn't made. He is like Topsy—he just grows. I was not selected leader. I just grew up to it. It is this way: The district leaders come to regard one of their number as most competent to lead, and naturally defer to him. The executive committee does not select anyone. . . . I am not envying the man who gets the job. He has got to be a firm, independent man, who can say "no" pretty often and shoulder a lot of trouble if it comes his way. He will have lots of trouble. He can count on that as a certain perquisite of the office.⁶¹

He who excuses himself accuses himself.⁶²

⁶¹ *New York Tribune*, December 5, 1901, 14:1.

⁶² Mr. Croker wrote at least two magazine articles during the course of his career. In one written for the *North American Review*, CLIV (1892), 227, he placed emphasis on the above words.



New York Times Wide World Photo

CHARLES FRANCIS MURPHY

CHAPTER VI

"COMMISSIONER" CHARLES F. MURPHY

Much water has passed under the political bridges since William M. Tweed ruled the destinies of New York City as master of Tammany Hall. Under "Honest John" Kelly Tammany made a distinct advance, and while some may question whether it progressed far with Richard Croker at the helm, nevertheless, he possessed qualities that mark him as a step in the evolution of the boss. Charles F. Murphy, taking up the leadership when Croker resigned, represents still another important stage.

Charles Francis Murphy, born on the East Side of New York City on June 20, 1858, definitely belonged to the Irish in racial stock, for both his parents claimed Ireland as native land. Charlie grew up in a neighborhood as Celtic perhaps as any part of Ireland. His father belonged to a family of Irish tenant farmers, passed through life rather casually, undaunted by his large family, and after enjoying life for eighty-eight years, died in 1902.¹ Charlie's mother, who had been a Mary Pendergrass before her marriage, shouldered most of the burdens which necessarily accompany a family of eight children.

After a very few years in public and parochial school, during which he did not emerge from the elementary grades, Charlie went to work in a wire factory. Still a youth, he left the wire works for a more lucrative job as caulker in Roache's shipyard on the East River. The heavy work of wire plant and shipyard developed considerable muscular strength which enabled him in early teens to gather around

¹ The senior Murphy is seldom referred to in print. But see Gustavus Myers, *The History of Tammany Hall* (New York, 1917), p. 299; *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, XIII, 574, and *Who's Who in America, 1922-1923* (Chicago, 1922), p. 2279.

his person a good-sized gang of Gas House lads. Among other activities his gang organized a baseball team, known as the "Senators," which defeated every competitor in its class for several seasons and even went on tour outside of the city.²

At the age of eighteen years young Murphy, probably through political wire-pulling, obtained a job as horse-car driver on the Blue Line which operated around Fourteenth Street. During his two years of driving he saved approximately five hundred dollars and in addition established a record as a horseman. His friends tell the story of a balky horse once assigned Murphy which one day stopped dead in the middle of the intersection of Broadway and Fourteenth Street. All efforts having proved abortive in causing the animal to move on so that traffic might pass, a policeman made ready to shoot it. Then Charlie removed the harness, gently replaced it, and yelled, "Whoa, there!" The horse, apparently thinking that it no longer drew the car, started off at full speed.³ In 1878 Murphy gave up the horse-car job and with his savings set up a small liquor saloon where his gang, now known as the "Sylvians" or "Sylvan Club," established headquarters. By hard work and advertising in the form of a five cent glass of beer with a bowl of good soup thrown in business prospered, and in 1881 Murphy opened a second saloon. In 1884 he added a third and in 1896 a hotel. Along in 1902 when he transferred business interests to relatives in order to devote attention to politics, he owned and operated four liquor establishments.⁴

With a brother in the board of aldermen, another on the police force, and a third who served at one time or another as alderman and councilman Murphy did not lack political

² For additional information on this period of Murphy's life, see the *New York Tribune*, October 26, 1902, sec. 2, 7:2.

³ See the *New York Tribune*, October 26, 1902, sec. 2, 7:2.

⁴ *New York Tribune*, October 26, 1903, 2:3.

stimulus.⁵ His gang of "Sylvians" offered good material for a beginning, and he entered the arena just as he reached legal age, at the same time allying himself with Tammany Hall in which his brothers had already attained some prominence. A rowing match added to his already growing influence. After the four Biglin brothers, Republican leaders of the Eighteenth, had challenged any and all men in the district to dispute their title as champion oarsmen, the "Sylvians," at the suggestion of their leader, arranged a match with the Republican braggarts. With most of the residents of the district out to witness the event, at the very last moment the "Sylvian" stroke fell ill. Rather than ignominiously lose the match, Murphy took the vacant place, with the result that the "Sylvians" won two races out of three and their chief became an idol of the Gas House district.⁶

Along in the eighties Murphy, who had gradually added to his following, luckily made the acquaintance of Edward Hagan, a disappointed office seeker. Francis B. Spinola, Tammany leader in the Eighteenth, had refused Hagan a renomination to the state assembly on the ground that he had had his share of offices. Drifting into one of Murphy's saloons, Hagan poured out his troubles to the proprietor and received an offer of financial backing if he would make the race as an independent. By means of a whirlwind campaign Hagan won election, then assumed the leadership of the district, but, becoming addicted to heavy drinking, died in 1892. Before his death he is said to have called his followers to his bed-side and instructed them that they should "See that Charlie's leader."⁷ At any rate Murphy became leader of

⁵ *New York Tribune*, June 22, 1903, 2:1.

⁶ For accounts of this event, see the *New York Tribune*, October 26, 1902, sec. 2, 7:2, and Franklin Matthews, "Charles Francis Murphy, Tammany's New Leader," *World's Work*, VI (1903), 3910.

⁷ *New York Tribune*, October 26, 1902, sec. 2, 7:2, and *New York Times*, April 26, 1924, p. 2.

the Eighteenth in 1892 and shortly thereafter took a seat on the Tammany executive committee.

For all the years between 1892 and his death in 1924 Mr. Murphy remained leader of the Gas House district, known as the "Eighteenth" in early days and later changed to the "Twelfth." He served as a member of the Democratic state committee in 1896, held "consultation with the leaders of the organization throughout the County" during the latter nineties, and in 1898 received an appointment from Mayor Van Wyck as dock commissioner.⁸ As a commissioner and treasurer of the dock board Mr. Murphy followed a consistent party policy. Although the law provided that the commissioners should advertise for bids whenever they leased piers or made any save petty expenditures, the Murphy board leased only one pier out of one hundred and thirty-nine at public bidding, expended \$627,000 from January 1, 1898 to September 20, 1899 without calling for bids, and gave one firm \$116,000 worth of work without competition during the same period.⁹ Altogether estimates place the city loss from low pier rentals at a sum in excess of two million dollars. Appearing before the Mazet Committee which investigated the dock department along with other departments of the city government, Mr. Murphy admitted that he had "not attempted to live up to that section for the public letting of contracts," maintained that his dock "department was perfect" and "all our employees . . . perfect," and declared that "When I can do it without violating the law, it is perfectly right to give out contracts to organization men. If I

⁸ See *Brooklyn Daily Eagle Almanac, 1896* (Brooklyn, 1896), p. 279, and Murphy's testimony in New York State Legislature, *Report of the Mazet Committee to Investigate the Departments of the City of New York* (5 vols., Albany, 1900), II, 2125.

⁹ *New York Tribune*, June 17, 1903, 1:5-6, and New York State Legislature, *Report of the Mazet Committee to Investigate the Departments of the City of New York*, II, 3330, 3333.

can, I will."¹⁰ He summed up his testimony with these words, "I do not excuse myself for anything I have done."¹¹ The criticism generated by the low rentals, long leases, and absence of competition became so bitter that "Commissioner" Murphy finally deemed it wise to make a statement explaining the situation. He said among other things, "If dock leases were to go to the highest bidder the same as contracts for public works, our dock fronts would be grabbed up by big corporations. This would result in the driving out of the smaller leaseholder who has already spent time and money in establishing a business. Even under the system in vogue today dock rentals are too high. . . . Trade and commerce should be encouraged, not driven away. . . . We found it an easy matter for combinations to be formed whereby the contractors could get together and combine to elevate the amount of bids by mutual agreement. This was stopped by means of the treasurer's orders."¹² From his one term on the dockboard Mr. Murphy derived the name commonly applied by political associates throughout his leadership, "The Commissioner."

The political situation in 1901 caused Richard Croker to withdraw from the leadership of Tammany Hall and place the reins in the hands of Lewis Nixon, a United States Naval Academy graduate and shipbuilder. After Mr. Nixon had tired and resigned, the executive committee in May, 1902, appointed a triumvirate, Murphy, McMahon, and Haffen, to guide the organization. On September 19, 1902, "Sport," as Bill Devery designated Murphy, received the place of leader by vote of the executive committee.¹³ Few observers seemed to have any serious idea that Mr. Murphy's leadership would endure for any length of time, for Croker

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2125.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 2143-2144.

¹² *New York Tribune*, June 27, 1903, 1:6.

¹³ *New York Tribune*, September 20, 1902, 1:1.

had withdrawn before and always after a time returned to resume control. Devery went so far as to remark, "If three lobsters can't run the organization, how can one do it, and that the one with the least brains?"¹⁴ After the election the "Commissioner" remained outwardly in his old position, refusing to take the chairmanship of the general committee as Tweed had done, or the chairmanship of the executive committee held by Kelly, or even the chairmanship of the finance committee which both Kelly and Croker had accepted. He became a sachem in the Society, but in the political organization remained the leader of the district which extended from Fourteenth Street north to Twenty-sixth Street and from a western boundary reaching as far as Irving Place to the East River.

"Commissioner" Murphy lost no time in an effort to retrieve the political fortunes of Tammany which hung at a low ebb in 1902. In the first election, which came within two months of his accession, he supported McLaughlin's protégé, Bird S. Coler, for governor. In the 1903 municipal election Mr. Murphy had his first real political tryout and succeeded in electing George B. McClellan and practically the entire Tammany ticket in spite of the efforts of Seth Low and of the Brooklyn followers of Hugh McLaughlin.¹⁵ Two years later he re-elected McClellan as mayor against the determined opposition of William R. Hearst who made the race himself.

Through the early days of Mr. Murphy's lordship William Devery proved somewhat of a thorn in the flesh. As a member of the executive committee he tried his best to obstruct the path and together with some Crokerites seriously crippled the leader's effectiveness. Finally the "Commissioner" refused to recognize his election to the executive

¹⁴ See the *New York Tribune*, September 20, 1902, 1:1.

¹⁵ See the *New York Tribune*, November 4, 1903. Mr. McClellan received 309,494 votes and Mr. Seth Low 247,642 votes.

committee on the ground that the committee stood as the judge of the qualifications of its members and could refuse a seat to an objectionable claimant. Devery fought mightily and received the consistent support of his district for several years, but Murphy managed to prevent him from taking a seat and finally won the struggle.¹⁶ An important asset, possessed by the "Commissioner" in this contest, took the form of an alliance with the Sullivan tribe of the Bowery. They supported Mr. Murphy so loyally that Henry George designated the alliance "Murphy, Sullivan, & Company out to make money."¹⁷

George B. McClellan, son of the Civil War general of that name, occupied a place as sort of protégé in the affections of "Commissioner" Murphy. Mr. McClellan had been thoughtful in small ways on several occasions. For example, as congressman he had appointed Mr. Murphy's namesake nephew to Annapolis and another nephew to West Point. Altogether the "Commissioner" expected much from Mr. McClellan. The 1905 municipal election, with McClellan and Hearst as principals, takes a place in the history of New York City because of its intensity. William Randolph Hearst made his stand on public ownership of city traction lines, attacked the Tammany leader with a tirade of bitter editorials, portrayed him as a convict in stripes, and after the election contested McClellan's victory on the ground that the election had been stolen from him. With Mr. McClellan seated at such great expense, it is not strange that his disaffection in 1906 caused Mr. Murphy a great deal of pain. As mayor, McClellan not only refused to follow the dictates of the "Commissioner" but started a movement to oust him from his position in Tammany Hall. Happily for Murphy he had foreseen such an exigency and caused an amendment to be

¹⁶ See the *New York Tribune*, September 20, 1902, 1:1, and June 6, 1906, 1:1, for accounts of the Devery episode.

¹⁷ *New York Tribune*, October 28, 1903, 2:4.

added to the rules of the Tammany executive committee shortly after his accession which provided that outgoing members might pass on the qualifications of newly-elected members and that the committee might enlarge itself by appointing additional members at its pleasure. Now that the revolt arose and defeat threatened, Mr. Murphy hauled forth the by-law, much to the surprise of his opponents who apparently did not know such a rule existed, and enlarged the committee from thirty-five to forty-three members, adding as new members his friends. By this shrewd bit of strategy he staved off the threatened loss of control over Tammany Hall, although, he, of course, suffered severely from lack of patronage normally available.¹⁸

The judicial campaign of 1906 proved instructive to the leader of the Wigwam. The convention chose seven of his followers as nominees, while Hearst placed three of his men.¹⁹ In the ensuing campaign the "Commissioner" alleged graft on the part of the Hearst Independence League and as a result received a summons to appear before a grand jury to make good his charge. During the seance with the grand jury he gave his business as "speculator" and admitted that "it was reckless" on his part to make such allegations.²⁰ After this episode he became more silent than ever, seldom lowering himself to cast aspersions at the opposition.

William J. Bryan received lukewarm support from the Wigwam and its leader in 1908. Lewis Chanler, the Democratic nominee for governor, drew stronger backing and his defeat by Charles E. Hughes annoyed Mr. Murphy who had scant sympathy for the gambling and other reforms of the Republican governor. In 1909 Tammany won a question-

¹⁸ See the *New York Tribune*, June 6, 1906, 1:1, and June 13, 1906, 2:3.

¹⁹ *New York Tribune*, October 11, 1906, 1:5.

²⁰ *New York Tribune*, October 19, 1906, 1:3-4, and October 20, 1906, 1:5.

able victory in the municipal election by electing Judge William J. Gaynor mayor. In the same election it lost the borough presidencies, several of the city departments, and the board of estimate.

Republican difficulties threw the gubernatorial election in 1910 to John A. Dix, a Democrat whom the "Commissioner" had accepted without much enthusiasm. At the same time Tammany gained control of the state legislature for the first time in many years and therefore found it possible to elect James A. O'Gorman to the United States Senate. In spite of the fact that Mr. Dix had not promised a great deal from the Tammany standpoint, he proved the greatest state asset, with the single exception of Alfred E. Smith, during the twenty-odd years of Mr. Murphy's leadership. Many a time in 1913 the "Commissioner" must have wished that Dix instead of Sulzer occupied the governor's office. Congressman William Sulzer, the "Commissioner's" "greatest political mistake," had long been a Wigwam stalwart. Upstate popularity rather than Mr. Murphy's manipulation made him the Democratic color-bearer in the state race of 1912. After Mr. Sulzer had safely ensconced himself in the office of governor, he very shortly began to pester the Tammany boss by his peculiar notions in regard to appointments and the general disposal of state patronage. After some months of long-suffering patience the "Commissioner" became irate and ordered Sulzer impeached on the charge that he had used personally sums of money contributed for campaign purposes. In a sensational session of more than a month the court of impeachment convicted the governor on three out of eight counts by a vote of forty-three to twelve and removed him from office.²¹

²¹ For an account of the Sulzer difficulty, see Samuel Bell Thomas, *The Boss or the Governor; the Truth About the Greatest Political Conspiracy in the History of America* (New York, 1914), *passim*. See also a collection of Sulzer correspondence in the Library of Amherst College.

Taking all things into consideration, the years 1913-1914 stand out as the blackest in all of Mr. Murphy's leadership. The year 1912 had been humiliating because of the attempt of William J. Bryan to have the "Commissioner" read out of the Democratic party at the Baltimore national convention. However, this move on the part of Bryan had no practical results. But the Sulzer affair, with its widespread publicity and counter charges, led the way to defeat in the municipal election of 1913, when J. Purroy Mitchell outran Edward McCall, the Wigwam candidate for mayor, by a large vote and Tammany lost control of every city and county office and secured only one seat on the board of estimate. Even Mr. Sulzer went to sit in the state assembly.

The 1914 state election went to the Republicans, and the Wilson administration turned a cold shoulder. Therefore, in 1914 Mr. Murphy found himself practically bereft of patronage in local, state, and national domains and reduced to the sad state of adviser. Richard Croker sent over his congratulations to the tune of, "It (Tammany) will never be able to win while Murphy leads it, never in the world. The fact that he has anything to do in picking out a ticket means its defeat. I don't say that Murphy is personally a bad man. I believe him to be honest. But he is pig-headed. He surrounds himself with a lot of little men who care nothing about the party and are only interested in getting contracts, and he puts all the power in their hands."²² The Democratic Club passed a resolution requesting that he cease "all participation in the party's affairs" and ousted him from membership.²³ Then in the investigation carried on by the Interstate Commerce Commission in the affairs of the New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railroad Company President Mellen testified that \$1,200,000 had been

²² *New York Times*, April 11, 1914, 1:4.

²³ Gustavus Myers, *The History of Tammany Hall*, p. 388.

paid certain politicians for franchise favors in New York City and that the New York Contracting and Trucking Company, owned by Mr. Murphy's brother and friends, secured without competition contracts amounting to between two and two and a half million dollars.²⁴ Even the newspapers branded the "Commissioner" as the "most notoriously unsuccessful boss that ever ruled Tammany Hall."²⁵ It may be imagined how much dissatisfaction and unrest all these defeats generated in the Wigwam itself. Only by means of a remarkable persistence did Mr. Murphy strive on and return the defiant reply to all taunts, "I am going to remain the leader of Tammany Hall no matter what some others might think they have to say about it."²⁶

The horizon brightened somewhat in 1915. Tammany placed unusually strong candidates in the field and elected a district attorney along with Alfred E. Smith as sheriff. The situation then continued to improve until 1917 when the Tammany ticket, with John F. Hylan at the head, gained a decisive victory with all the candidates elected at pluralities averaging about 150,000. The next year Alfred E. Smith secured the Democratic nomination as governor, although W. R. Hearst had hoped to have it, and in the ensuing election defeated Charles S. Whitman by a close margin of some eighteen thousand votes.

Generally cautious in business affairs, the "Commissioner" in 1919, through connections with Louis N. Hartog, a glucose manufacturer who had war contracts with the British government aggregating seven million dollars, became involved in several law suits. Mr. Murphy had advanced Hartog the sum of \$175,000 for use in the North Kensington Refinery, with the understanding that stock be

²⁴ "Financial Transactions of the New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railroad," *Senate Document 20*, 63 Cong., 2 sess., pp. 37-56.

²⁵ *New York Times*, November 2, 1913, sec. 5, 5:1.

²⁶ Gustavus Myers, *The History of Tammany Hall*, p. 388.

issued him in return together with one-fourth of the profits. Disputes in the management of the company brought about its failure, and Hartog sued Murphy and others to collect ten million dollars in damages. The "Commissioner" replied with a counter suit against Hartog for \$175,000 and a libel suit against W. R. Hearst for one million dollars.²⁷ The next year an extraordinary grand jury indicted Mr. Murphy for conspiring to defraud the United States of excess profit taxes earned by the North Kensington Refining Company.²⁸ When the "Commissioner" appeared on the stand in the Hartog case, Attorney Steuer asked whether the national administration in 1918 was not Democratic. Mr. Murphy replied, "Was it? Perhaps it was. It wasn't to me though. I didn't get much out of it." Being pressed further for an answer he admitted, "Well, they called it that."²⁹ Although the federal indictment was eventually quashed, it brought unfavorable publicity and helped defeat the Tammany candidates in 1919.

With few exceptions the years 1920-1924 brought complete success to Boss Murphy. Mayor Hylan proved fairly satisfactory in spite of some queer moments, generally extended the city patronage without question, and received re-election in 1921. Alfred E. Smith, as governor, greatly aided Tammany and proudly proclaimed his allegiance to the Hall. Although Mr. Smith lost the election in 1920 when Mr. Harding swept New York State, he retrieved the place in the next election, and in 1924, another presidential year, ran up a magnificent plurality in the face of a Republican victory in the race for the electoral votes.

National politics bestowed few favors on the "Commissioner" prior to 1920. In 1904 and again in 1908 he

²⁷ See *New York Times*, April 27, 1919, 18:3; October 27, 1919, 21:1; and October 29, 1919, 17:8, for accounts of the suits.

²⁸ *New York Times*, June 24, 1920, 1:5.

²⁹ *New York Times*, April 29, 1923, sec. 8, 6:1.

nominally supported the national ticket, even though it did not interest him. Neither of the Wilson administrations proved of much value, with a few exceptions, such as the appointment of James W. Gerard as ambassador.³⁰ Therefore, it was not until 1920 that Mr. Murphy manifested any particular enthusiasm in a national election, although he had ordinarily attended the conventions. In that year he journeyed west for the San Francisco national convention, took a part in its proceedings, and derived considerable pleasure from its nomination of Governor Cox. In this convention he urged that the party declare for disarmament, saying, "the world must disarm or the world must starve."³¹ Largely through his efforts the national convention of 1924 was scheduled for New York City, the home of Alfred E. Smith whom Mr. Murphy hoped to nominate for president. For months before his death in April, 1924, he had engaged in councils with various leaders throughout the country for the purpose of bringing about Governor Smith's nomination.

A broad-shouldered man, of medium height and sturdy build, Mr. Murphy possessed hard muscles handed down from his days as a ward politician and saloon keeper. His full, clean-shaven face, ruddy in complexion, bore marks of strength, although it lacked handsomeness on account of somewhat thick lips and dull eyes.³² Perhaps above all other bosses he held his tongue, remaining a confessed enigma to the general public and contenting himself with occasional written statements instead of public addresses. Nevertheless, with a chosen few, such as Phil Donohue and Tom Foley, he unbended and even became somewhat animated in chatter. Preferring to remain in the background, the "Commissioner" seldom appeared on convention floors or at public

³⁰ *New York Evening Post*, January 11, 1913, 1:3.

³¹ See the *New York Times*, July 7, 1920, 3:4, and December 27, 1920, 9:4.

³² See the *New York Times*, February 22, 1914, sec. 5, 2:1.

gatherings but interviewed delegates in the seclusion of a nearby hotel suite. A good memory, even in matters of petty detail, a constitution that enabled unending labor, and a disposition seldom ruffled by opposition or defeat stood him in good stead in the turmoil and discouragement of his career. Mr. Murphy did not smoke nor gamble, used liquor moderately, and although dressing well, maintained simplicity in all of his living.⁸³

Loyal to friends the "Commissioner" made fewer political enemies than those who by garrulous tongues give umbrage. Inclined to be easy-going when nothing hung in the balance, he became a hard master in time of important campaign, accepting no excuse for failure or disobedience. When aroused, he braved all obstacles and carried his warfare to a bitter end, but fortunately he did not often react so intensely. He brought Tammany Hall to a point of efficiency remarkable for thoroughness and smoothness and left it stronger than it had ever before been. In early days Mr. Murphy stood on the sidewalk watching the crowd as it milled by in order to maintain fresh contacts. When he became leader, he established three headquarters—Tammany Hall, where he interviewed members of the organization, Delmonico's, where at luncheons representatives from higher politics or from non-political realms advised, and at home on East Seventeenth Street. Intimate contacts with men from various walks of life account to no small extent for his prolonged career.

The "Commissioner" married in 1902 and set up an establishment in a somewhat unpretentious residence on East Seventeenth Street. The Murphys had no children, although Mabel Graham, Mrs. Murphy's daughter, who later married

⁸³ See the *New York Tribune*, October 26, 1902, sec. 2, 7:2, and the *New York Times*, September 28, 1922, 2:4, for accounts of Mr. Murphy's personal characteristics.

Surrogate Foley, lived with them. In the summer the family occupied a place at Good Ground on Long Island, where Mr. Murphy played golf on his own course and dilly-dallied about with a bit of farming.³⁴ On the whole the "Commissioner" distinguished himself from youth by loyalty to family, for he constantly contributed to the support of his mother and less prosperous sisters and brothers. Two nephews received appointment to West Point and Annapolis, and another became the private secretary to Ambassador Gerard. Three brothers, John J., Daniel, and William, moved along upward as Charles climbed the political ladder. When Mr. Murphy died, he left a house to a sister and eleven-eightieths of his estate to a sister and to nieces and nephews.³⁵

Bourke Cochran once estimated Mr. Murphy's wealth at not less than fifteen million dollars.³⁶ At his death it was said that he left property valued at \$450,000, but the final settlement revealed an estate of slightly more than two million dollars. Of this amount real estate made up approximately \$100,000 and stocks and bonds of several varieties accounted for the greater part of the rest.³⁷ Mr. Murphy laid the foundation of a fortune before he became the boss of Tammany Hall by engaging in the liquor business. Report always associated him with the New York Contracting and Trucking Company which started business with few assets when he occupied the position of dock commissioner.³⁸ John J. Murphy, a brother, James Gaffney, and Richard J. Crouch, a political henchman, owned five shares each of the stock of the company, and the remaining eighty-five shares

³⁴ *New York Tribune*, October 19, 1904, 1:3.

³⁵ See the *New York Evening Post*, January 11, 1913, 1:3, and the *New York Times*, April 26, 1924, p. 2, and May 10, 1924, 1:6.

³⁶ *Current Opinion*, LV (1913), 404.

³⁷ *New York Times*, July 8, 1925, 1:6.

³⁸ See the *New York Tribune*, February 16, 1905, 14:1.

belonged to some mysterious person whose identity never came to light. This concern received valuable pier leases at a mere fraction of their value and obtained contracts, amounting to more than twelve million dollars, from the Pennsylvania Railroad, the New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railroad, and the Consolidated Gas Company.³⁹ Records show that in the case of the Pennsylvania contract their bid exceeded by four hundred thousand dollars the lowest bid.⁴⁰ President Mellen of the New Haven admitted that he had given a large contract to the company because "they could do the work and that it would probably progress faster and more to my satisfaction than if I gave it to outsiders."⁴¹ However, Mr. Murphy always denied any connection with the concern. He held 500 shares of Consolidated Ice stock in 1905, interested himself in the North Kensington Refining Company to the extent of \$175,000, and once admitted before a grand jury that he was a "speculator."⁴²

For recreation the "Commissioner" mainly played golf. His country place on Long Island had a private nine-hole course, and in addition he belonged to the Oakland and Shinnecock golf clubs. Not many realized the kindness that laid buried beneath the frigidity or perhaps timidity of Mr. Murphy. Sometimes the press mentioned a check for the Boy Scouts or for the Mayor's Housing Fund.⁴³ However, most of his contributions remained in the dark. As far back as 1888 he contributed \$4,000 for the blizzard sufferers and from that time forth continued sizable benefactions. As a

³⁹ *New York Tribune*, April 26, 1903, 1:5, and February 16, 1905, 1:4.

⁴⁰ *New York Times*, October 28, 1917, sec. 7, 6:1.

⁴¹ "Financial Transactions of the New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railroad," *Senate Document 19*, 63 Cong., 2 sess., p. 754.

⁴² *New York Tribune*, October 22, 1905, sec. 5, 1:2, and October 20, 1906, 1:5, and the *New York Times*, April 27, 1919, 18:3.

⁴³ See the *New York Times*, June 17, 1919, 30:2, and August 7, 1919, 14:1.

member of the Roman Catholic Church he attended Epiphany Church regularly.

The American press printed more than fifteen million words of praise and criticism of the almost twenty-two years of the "Commissioner's" lordship over Tammany Hall in the week following his death.⁴⁴ From the standpoint of his friends he performed his work well and "brought the party from the position of mediocrity to a position of power and strength such as it never before attained."⁴⁵ However, to Tammany opponents "he was the exemplar of and beneficiary of a system which, without official responsibility, degrades our official life, and which condemns New York City to suffer from maladministration and the lowest moral standards in public office."⁴⁶ When asked not long before his death to evaluate his contribution to the Hall, Mr. Murphy picked out the opportunity he had opened to young men and the separation of the police department from politics.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ *New York Times*, May 3, 1924, 19:3.

⁴⁵ *New York Times*, May 3, 1924, 14:7, resolution of the Democratic State Committee.

⁴⁶ *New York Times*, April 26, 1924, 14:2.

⁴⁷ *New York Times*, January 25, 1925, sec. 9, 6:5.

CHAPTER VII

"JUDGE" GEORGE W. OLVANY

The outstanding municipal boss in brevity of leadership is the recent Tammany leader, George Washington Olvany. With somewhat less than five years between his election to the post left vacant by the death of the veteran Charles Francis Murphy and his resignation as head of Tammany Hall, it is obviously not possible to deal extensively with his career as political baron. Nevertheless, his preparation, experience as leader, and his quite unusual resignation make it amply worthwhile to consider him.

Not far from the childhood home of Governor Alfred E. Smith on the East Side of New York City George Olvany was born slightly more than fifty years ago—to be exact, on June 20, 1876. His father, James J. Olvany, was a native of the United States. His mother, Harriet E. Olvany, immigrated to the United States from England. A paternal great-grandfather linked the family with Ireland. James J. Olvany, who died shortly before his son became leader of Tammany Hall, made a living as boss truckman and during his later years as an employee of the Edison Company. In addition to George the Olvanys had three children, a son and two daughters.¹

When George Olvany was not yet a year old, his family moved from 1 Pike Street to Greenwich Village, where they have since resided. Here George passed through public school number three. After he had completed grammar school, he attended business college for a time. Then he worked his way through New York University Law School,

¹ Mr. Olvany has been quite generous as well as patient in furnishing information relative to his background. Because of his kindness it has been possible to obviate a number of factual errors. New York newspapers are unfortunately somewhat inaccurate in their statements. But see the *New York Times*, July 15, 1924.



New York Times Wide World Photo

"JUDGE" GEORGE W. OLVANY

was graduated in 1897, and in the same year received admission to the New York bar.²

Entering politics at once after reaching his majority, Mr. Olvany allied himself from the beginning with Tammany Hall. Within a few months of his twenty-first birthday the Young Men's Democratic Club of the district, numbering over a thousand members, chose him as its vice-president. In 1900 he received appointment to the Tammany law committee, a body of forty-eight members. As chairman of this committee some years later Mr. Olvany became the personal adviser of "Commissioner" Murphy.³

Soon after graduating from law school "Judge" Olvany encountered public recognition in the form of an appointment as deputy assistant in the offices of the corporation counsel of New York City. In 1905 he made a campaign in the Fifth District, a staunch Republican center, for a seat on the board of aldermen and largely because of prominence in the Young Men's Democratic Club won election. As alderman Mr. Olvany did not especially distinguish himself, although he seems to have taken the post seriously, if one can judge from his regular attendance at meetings. In as much as the Democrats stood in a minority he received assignment to but one semi-important committee—that of codification of ordinances, and even here his name ranked last.⁴ In the organization proceedings Olvany voted with a minority that supported the candidacy of "Little Tim" Sullivan for vice-chairman. He made less than the usual number of nominations for commissioners of deeds and introduced few ordinances all told. His first ordinance provided

² See the *New York Evening Post*, July 15, 1924, 7:2, and the *New York Times*, July 15, 1924, 2:1.

³ For information on Olvany's political beginnings, see the *New York Times*, July 14, 1924, 3:1; July 15, 1924, 2:1; and July 20, 1924, sec. 8.

⁴ *Proceedings of the Board of Aldermen of the City of New York*, 1906, I, 338.

that street cars should display outside signs indicating their destination and should collect only a single fare on any one line.⁵ Other ordinances looked to the closing of city offices at three o'clock in the afternoon during the months of July and August, to incidental expenses for the law department, and contained permits for the erection of a storm door and for an Indian and cowboy parade.⁶ Alderman Olvany's vote usually went for party policies. Perhaps his least praiseworthy stand was against an ordinance providing for the systematizing of city salaries.⁷

After one term as alderman Mr. Olvany resumed private law practice for a time. Although out of office, he maintained political connections quite carefully, with the result that in 1910 two rewards came his way. The more important of the two, the chairmanship of the Twenty-fifth Assembly District, issued from the Democratic county committee. Mayor W. J. Gaynor bestowed the other in the form of a first deputy fire-commissionership. During his term as fire commissioner Mr. Olvany compiled the first printed set of New York City fire rules and regulations. It is significant that none of his decisions as trial commissioner were ever reversed by the courts.

In 1913 "Judge" Olvany returned to private law practice, only to be chosen leader of the Tenth District in 1914. He retained this place until 1924 when elevation to the court of general sessions necessitated less activity in practical politics. As leader of the Tenth he did very well indeed. Among his protégés stand out Sheriff David H. Knott, successor to Sheriff Alfred E. Smith, and District Attorney Joab Banton.⁸ When Smith became sheriff of New York County, he chose Mr. Olvany to fill the very responsible po-

⁵ *Ibid.*, 610-611.

⁶ *Ibid.*, II, 981, and *ibid.*, 1907, IV, ordinances 2586 and 2633.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 1906, I, 577-578.

⁸ *New York Herald-Tribune*, July 15, 1924, 2:2.

sition of sheriff's counsel. Governor Smith's successors in the office, Sheriffs Knott and Nagle, retained him as counsel until 1924.

During the later months of 1919 "Judge" Olvany became chairman of the law committee of Tammany Hall of which he had been a member since 1900. This position necessarily threw him into rather intimate association with "Commissioner" Murphy, for as chairman of the law committee it was his duty to advise Mr. Murphy on all matters involving a point of law. The "Commissioner" apparently placed considerable reliance in his legal advisor, and it is said once remarked, "George Olvany is long-headed and sound. He knows what to do for the good of the organization without being told, and he does it as well as any other man I know of."⁹ During his five years as chairman of the law committee Mr. Olvany, with the assistance of John G. Saxe and John W. Davis, handled two well-known contested cases. One involved Royal H. Weller and the other Sol Bloom, both of whom claimed seats in the United States House of Representatives. The "Judge" appeared before the committee on elections and in both cases succeeded in having the contestants seated.

On several occasions during 1923 Mr. Olvany received consideration as a possible supreme court candidate for the fall election. However, the number aspiring to this judicial office happened to be unusually large in that year, and, therefore, he suggested to the "Commissioner" that his name be dropped for the time being. It is said that Mr. Murphy, accustomed to the rough scramble for office, was immensely pleased at the action. At any rate Olvany did not have long to wait for a place on the bench, for Governor Smith appointed him to the court of general sessions to take effect on January 1, 1924.

⁹ See the *New York Evening Post*, July 15, 1924, 7:3.

After Mr. Murphy's sudden death in April, 1924, a special committee was named by the executive committee of Tammany Hall to canvass the situation and make recommendations for the future.¹⁰ Surrogate James A. Foley, who had married Mrs. Murphy's daughter, received the support of the committee, but when the place of leader was tendered him he felt unable to accept.¹¹ Within a few hours of the "Commissioner's" death Mr. Olvany's name appeared in the newspapers as a possible choice.¹² After some deliberation the special committee postponed action until July, which the *New York Times* interpreted as "the collapse of the boom for Judge George W. Olvany of the Court of General Sessions."¹³ Nevertheless, on July fifteenth Judge Olvany, having received the recommendation of the sub-committee, was duly elected by the executive committee leader as successor to "Commissioner" Murphy by a vote of 22 2/3 to 1/3. He accepted "the call of the New York County Democratic organization, as voiced by its executive committee," because "though unexpected, (it) is too strong to resist."¹⁴

"Judge" Olvany takes a place among the group of "big leaders" as far as his physique is concerned. Although he weighs about one hundred and eighty-five pounds, six feet of height and a rugged frame save him from any suggestion of stoutness. His face, well-browned by the out-of-doors, a "genuine Tammany jaw," steady blue eyes, and a pleasant smile strike the observer. Altogether he is a distinguished-looking man. In contrast to the fashion plate apparel of Mayor Walker Mr. Olvany dresses as carefully and conservatively as any man of affairs.

¹⁰ *New York Times*, May 9, 1924, 1:3.

¹¹ *New York Times*, May 8, 1924, 1:4, and May 9, 1924, 1:3.

¹² *New York Times*, May 2, 1924, 1:6.

¹³ *New York Times*, May 23, 1924, 1:7.

¹⁴ *New York Times*, July 15, 1924, 2:1.

Academically the "Judge" made a good record in law school and in addition succeeded in mixing rather easily with his fellow students. Yet even at that period he is described as being "a better listener than a talker."¹⁵ "Commissioner" Murphy could listen attentively and speak very little, but he lacked the ability to circulate easily among men. Mr. Olvany can do both. Mr. Murphy also seldom spoke in public, because his voice and command of language made public speech embarrassing rather than effective. "Judge" Olvany can speak persuasively without undue effort. As leader he made nominating speeches at state conventions and said a few happy words when called on informally at political gatherings. In contrast to his predecessor he appeared openly at conventions, rode in a parade with the governor, and represented New York City at the Philadelphia Sesqui-centennial.¹⁶ He worked hard, almost as hard as the "Commissioner," and that is saying a great deal.

As a rule "Judge" Olvany hesitated before declaring open war on those who happened to differ with him, for he has ordinarily been "strong for compromise."¹⁷ He apparently believed that quiet firmness accomplishes more than anything else. Thus in the case of the five-cent subway-fare he declared his general belief in such a rate but sought to keep the issue out of politics.¹⁸ Nevertheless, while he supported Governor Smith's position of law enforcement, he did not hesitate to publish his opposition to the Volstead act.¹⁹ His preference for compromise does not indicate that as head of

¹⁵ *New York Evening Post*, July 15, 1924, 7:3.

¹⁶ See the *New York Times*, November 2, 1926, 2:5, and November 13, 1926, 3:2.

¹⁷ *New York Evening Post*, July 15, 1924, 7:3.

¹⁸ See the *New York Times*, July 29, 1926, 1:4.

¹⁹ For Mr. Olvany's views on prohibition one can consult almost any file of New York newspapers, for he has made frequent utterances on the subject. See, for example, the *New York Times*, December 11, 1926, 2:3, or September 28, 1927.

Tammany Hall, and, therefore, in control of the Democracy of New York County, he was an "easy boss." Indeed he demonstrated that he is not a person to receive unreasonable dictation. In the selection of a leader for the Seventeenth Assembly District in 1925 he quietly informed the district that James J. Frawley was to be chosen although they desired someone from within the district.²⁰ The "Judge" seems to be genial enough, and his smile is most disarming, but the cordiality carries with it a casualness that suggests that in time of stress it can be easily sloughed off. He did not lead in the days of Kelly, Croker, or even Murphy, and though he was a good disciplinarian, necessarily employed a tact and patience which would have seemed beneath their dignity.

Professing the Roman Catholic faith, Mr. Olvany attends quite regularly Saint Joseph's Church in New York City. He seems to be reasonably yet discriminatingly generous in response to charitable appeals. Perhaps the purchase of a thousand Stone Mountain half-dollars at one dollar each might be cited as a fairly typical example of his giving.²¹ The "Judge" belongs to numerous societies of one kind and another. Among these may be mentioned the Manhattan Club, National Democratic Club, New York County Lawyers' Association, Friendly Sons of Saint Patrick, Elks Lodge, Iroquois Club, New York Athletic Club, and the Bellport Country Club. He is one of a very few political barons to hold membership in a Greek letter fraternity, in his case Delta Chi.

It is not without significance that Mr. Olvany came to the leadership of Tammany as the first representative of a profession. Even the newspapers commented somewhat favorably on his professional standing.²² He has enjoyed a

²⁰ *New York Times*, June 5, 1925, 3:5.

²¹ *New York Times*, March 11, 1926, 7:1.

²² See, for example, the *New York Evening Post*, July 15, 1924, 1:1.

fair practice, first as an independent lawyer and more recently as a member of a firm. Upon his election as leader he announced that he would resume the practice of law and implied that he would attempt and expect to make a living outside of politics. He said, "For many years, and until appointed to the bench a few months ago, I enjoyed a successful law practice. When I resume my practice I shall scrupulously comply with the ethics of the profession regarding the clients by whom I am retained and in the legal business which I accept."²³ Shortly thereafter he formed a law partnership with Mark Eisner, former United States collector of internal revenue, and James F. Donnelly, sometime president of the Bronx Bar Association, and established offices in the Johns-Manville Building on Madison Avenue in New York and the Transportation Building in Washington. The firm now bears the name "Olvany, Eisner, and Donnelly."

The newspapers, which generally attribute fabulous wealth to political leaders, admit that Mr. Olvany is "a man of only moderate means."²⁴ Income tax returns show that he paid a tax of \$1,063 on his 1924 income, which would indicate that it exceeded the \$20,000 mark.²⁵ The *New York Directory of Directors* has listed the "Judge" as director of only one business firm and that before he became leader.²⁶

Deriving much pleasure from out-of-door sports, Olvany fishes, hunts, and, especially since his accession to the Tammany leadership, plays golf. He also believes in absenting himself from New York City at intervals. During the almost five years of his leadership he made junkets to France, the Pacific Coast, and Florida, to say nothing of shorter trips to Atlantic City, Philadelphia, and upstate New York. He has a country place at Blue Point, Long Island,

²³ *New York Times*, July 15, 1924, 2:1.

²⁴ See the *New York Evening Post*, July 15, 1924, 1:1.

²⁵ *New York Times*, September 4, 1925, 6:3.

²⁶ See the issue for 1919-1920 (New York, 1919), p. 592.

where he mingles in the community life to some extent, as is indicated by his serving as costume judge at a benefit masquerade ball.²⁷

In December, 1911, Mr. Olvany married Miss Agnes Irene Halpin of Scarborough, New York. They have one child, George Washington, Junior, now a lad in the teens. The family home is located down on West Twelfth Street in one of the older residential sections of the city.

Unlike his predecessors, John Kelly or Charles F. Murphy, who undertook the task of leading when the organization not only enjoyed slight political control but suffered from a bad reputation, the "Judge" came to the top with Tammany firmly in the saddle in New York City, a most ardent member of the Wigwam governor of New York State, and the organization enjoying a better reputation than it probably had since it became interested in politics. On the surface one might conclude, therefore, that he had a very easy berth. As a matter of fact his Tammany friends regarded his task as more difficult than it would have been had he taken control at a less successful time. As soon as affairs in the court of general sessions could be cleared up, Mr. Olvany resigned.

Approaching national and state elections left little time for delay after his elevation to the leadership. In August, 1924, the "Judge" went to Clarksburg, West Virginia, to attend the notification of Mr. Davis as presidential nominee.²⁸ With the campaign in full swing he established a precedent by calling on Mayor Hylan at the City Hall and later on the president of the board of aldermen to urge that they take an active part in the national campaign and speak in behalf of Mr. Davis.²⁹ Later in the fall he issued statements calling on all Democrats to support the national as well as the

²⁷ *New York Times*, August 30, 1925, 22:7.

²⁸ See the *New York Times*, August 12, 1924, 5:2.

²⁹ *New York Times*, October 10, 1924, 7:2.

state ticket and announced that every district leader and his subordinates "without exception are working night and day . . . in the interest of the national ticket."³⁰ Finally he conferred with Clem Shaver, national chairman, on the outlook and progress of the campaign.

Although the national ticket and all the state ticket with the exception of the governor was elected by the Republicans, the Democrats piled up from three to four hundred thousand pluralities in New York City, and Alfred E. Smith received 514,818 votes more than his opponent, Mr. Roosevelt, the largest plurality ever given a candidate in New York City.³¹ Mr. Olvany succeeded in naming eight out of nine state senators and nineteen out of twenty-three assemblymen to be elected from New York county.

Beginning in the spring of 1925, the question of a municipal ticket for the fall election crowded out all other matters on the horizon of Tammany Hall. "Judge" Olvany remained silent on the situation until July. Early in that month, led on by certain talk that attributed the real choice of a ticket to Governor Smith, he suddenly loosed his tongue and issued a clear-cut statement. He said among other things, "I want to make it clear right now that I am the leader of Tammany Hall. This organization is not being run either from Albany or from the City Hall. I am responsible to the executive committee of Tammany Hall and to nobody else. No shadowy hand from Albany or from the City Hall is over my head. I am not a figurehead for any one else. . . . Nobody is leader except me. As long as I sit in this chair, I will be the leader. When I cannot be that, I will quit. If I am to carry the responsibility for decisions made here, I must have what goes with it."³²

³⁰ *New York Times*, October 30, 1924, 1:6.

³¹ See the *New York Times*, November 6, 1924, 1:3.

³² *New York Times*, July 3, 1925, 1:8.

Toward the end of July the "Judge" invited the Democratic leaders of Brooklyn, the Bronx, Queens, and Richmond to lunch with him at the New York Athletic Club.³³ The real purpose of the meeting, as everyone perceived, was to talk over the approaching contest. Several other meetings were held, but John H. McCooey, boss of Brooklyn, and the leaders of Queens and Richmond, apparently refused to be moved from support of Mayor Hylan. After a period of sounding out the people Mr. Olvany early in August announced to the executive committee that Mayor Hylan could not be re-elected and named Senator James J. Walker as his candidate for mayor.³⁴

The primary election in September, in which Mayor John F. Hylan ran against Senator Walker for the Democratic nomination, aroused great excitement. Mayor Hylan carried on a whirlwind campaign and called upon the people of New York City "to save the Democratic party from being wrecked and your City from being turned over to the traction increased-fare interests."³⁵ Meanwhile Tammany was hard at work. An editorial in the *New York Times* remarked that "Tammany never displayed more efficiency in preparing for the primary and getting out the vote."³⁶ Senator Walker received the prize by a plurality of 95,543 votes and even carried Brooklyn, the stronghold of Hylan and McCooey, by somewhat more than five thousand votes.³⁷

In the final campaign Senator Walker met Frank D. Waterman, the penmaker, who represented the Republicans. Walker received the support of McCooey and the Hylanites after the primary, and the contest waxed only moderately warm. The returns gave Walker a plurality of 405,334

³³ See the *New York Times*, July 29, 1925, 1:5.

³⁴ *New York Times*, August 7, 1925.

³⁵ Extract from Hylan campaign letter dated August 25, 1925.

³⁶ September 17, 1925, 32:1.

³⁷ See the *New York Times*, September 17, 1925, 1:8.

votes.³⁸ Besides the mayor, the Democrats elected all the city officers, the district attorney, sixty out of sixty-three aldermen, all the borough presidents, and fifty-six out of sixty-two assemblymen. Considering the fact that Mayor Walker is an ardent Tammany brave rather than a distinguished vote-getter from the outside, the election could scarcely have been bettered from the Tammany standpoint. The elections of 1926, 1927, and 1928, while not as exciting as that of 1925, in general maintained the success of the earlier year and in places heightened it.

Following the election of 1925 Senator Walker proceeded on a tour of the South to establish a Tammany contact with Southern Democrats. If his speeches to the effect that Tammany is "safe at home but (wants) to make its contribution to the cause of national Democracy" meant anything, "Judge" Olvany was not content with victory in New York City.³⁹ Indeed there are numerous indications that Mr. Olvany did not intend to confine his interests to New York City. As late as December, 1928, he conferred with Governor-elect Roosevelt in regard to state appointments. In the election of a United States senator in 1926 he supported Justice R. F. Wagner, the successful candidate. At the state convention of the same year he made the speech placing Justice Cardozo, an extremely able jurist, in nomination for the chief justiceship of the court of appeals.⁴⁰

During the national campaign of 1928 Mr. Olvany occupied an important, although not a preëminent place, in Democratic circles. He met George Brennan of Illinois and Tom Taggart of Indiana presumably for the purpose of

³⁸ *New York Times*, November 6, 1925, 2:2.

³⁹ See the *New York Times*, November 10, 1925, 1:2, and November 11, 1925, 1:6.

⁴⁰ For these activities, see the *New York Times*, August 16, 1926, 1:6; September 29, 1926, 3:5; April 28, 1927, 25:8; and December 22, 1928, 19:8.

talking about national politics. Later he attended the convention at Houston as an avowed supporter of Governor Smith. After the nomination he interviewed the press in support of Smith and to offset criticism in the West and South contributed articles to *Scribner's Magazine* and *Current History* in which he sought by historical and current argument to allay apprehension of Tammany Hall.⁴¹ In spite of the large plurality which he rolled up for Governor Smith in New York City, there was some criticism because the plurality was not large enough to offset the up-state vote. Nevertheless, after the election, his hold on Tammany was "declared stronger than ever before."⁴²

The resignation of "Judge" Olvany as leader of Tammany Hall on March 15, 1929, caused much comment, perhaps partially because it came as a surprise even to his associates in the Hall. There had, however, been rumors of such a resignation on two or three earlier occasions, although they had been vigorously denied. The *New York Times* stated in its editorial columns, "An abdication like Mr. Olvany's is almost without precedent."⁴³ The formal reason given for the retirement was ill-health. A heart specialist and a neurologist informed the press that Mr. Olvany was "run down" and that they as his medical advisors could not be responsible unless he took a long vacation from his numerous duties.⁴⁴ The above explanation does not satisfy many political observers, although it seems probable that it is good as far as it goes. The members of the executive committee of Tammany Hall have been divided in their opinion as to important policies. One group wants a continuance of the old system and frequently refers to the good

⁴¹ "Tammany As a Patriotic Society," *Current History*, XXIX (1928), 252, and "Present-day Tammany," *Scribner's*, LXXXIV (1928), 507.

⁴² *New York Times*, November 9, 1928, 2:3.

⁴³ March 18, 1929, p. 24.

⁴⁴ *New York Times*, March 16, 1929, pp. 1, 2.

old days of Murphy. A second group desires certain changes and feels that Tammany must conform to modern conditions. The election of Mr. Olvany was supported by both groups, except for John F. Curry, now boss but then a district leader. However, many of the outstanding members of the first group, such as Tom Foley, have died since the elevation of Mr. Olvany. In spite of sympathy for the more conservative group, "Judge" Olvany has aroused criticism because he has considered certain changes necessary. For example, certain persons resented the desertion of the historic Wigwam on Fourteenth Street for the modern quarters on Nineteenth Street and Union Square East. Again there has been more or less feeling on the part of certain lawyer members of the Hall that the Olvany firm has done a "tremendous business to the detriment of the business of other lawyer members of Tammany."⁴⁵ At any rate the district leaders insisted that Olvany's successor must not be a lawyer and elected a professional politician. The reports that the resignation resulted from disagreements with Mayor Walker and former Governor Smith have been categorically denied.

⁴⁵ *New York Times*, March 17, 1929, p. 2.

CHAPTER VIII

"OLD MAN" HUGH McLAUGHLIN

Kings County and the sometime city of Brooklyn have been dominated by several political overlords of note. Hugh McLaughlin, Edward M. Shepard, Patrick McCarren, and John H. McCooley, barons of the last half a century, especially deserve mention. Among this group Hugh McLaughlin stands out not only in length of political career, point of influence, and ability, but as a character.

Mr. McLaughlin was born in the city of Brooklyn on Furnam Street under Brooklyn Heights. The exact date of his birth is somewhat uncertain because of absence of record. However, the years 1826 and 1827 and the month of April have the most acceptable claims. The McLaughlin family usually observed his birthday on April 2 and preferred the year 1826 to the year 1827.¹ Mr. McLaughlin's parents, both natives of Ireland, emigrated to the United States early in the nineteenth century and found it rather difficult to provide a comfortable living for their ten children, of whom Hugh was the youngest. Hugh McLaughlin, Senior, helped build Fort Greene in the War of 1812, made for himself a place in Brooklyn history by boldly ending a town war over a fence built to shut off the Irish from using a street leading to the more aristocratic section, and died when his youngest son was thirteen years of age.² A sister, Nancy, and a brother, Luke, stand most prominently among the children. Another brother perished as a lighterman, and two sisters married two other McLaughlins. On the whole the sons and daughters

¹ As to the date of Mr. McLaughlin's birth, see the *New York Tribune*, November 1, 1896, sec. 2, 8:3; *New York Evening Post*, December 8, 1904, 9:2; *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, December 8, 1904, p. 16; and *Brooklyn Citizen*, December 8, 1904, p. 1.

² See Henry R. Stiles, *History of Kings County and Brooklyn* (2 vols., New York, 1884), I.

as well as the parents had a hard time financially and depended quite largely throughout their lives on the munificence of Hugh.³

Educational opportunities in that period of Brooklyn history to which Mr. McLaughlin's boyhood days belong did not ordinarily extend to poor children, especially to poor Irish children. If Mr. McLaughlin attended school at all, he certainly did not pass beyond the elementary grades.⁴ He first definitely appears on the scene as a leader of a gang and incidentally as a local pugilist of some renown. Soon he became an apprentice at Thursby's ropewalk. Here he refused to join the union, with three other apprentices received discharge at the union's demand, and acquired a feeling of hatred for organized labor. After leaving Thursby's he went to work at Howell's ropewalk and then found a job at the docks handling barrels. The next definite information places him in a fish shop in the Atlantic market of Brooklyn. Luke McLaughlin, the elder brother previously referred to, owned and operated a fish stall in the Atlantic market for some years. In his will, dated June 26, 1849, he provided that his watch and chain should go to Hugh if his daughter died before maturity, made Hugh the guardian of his daughter, and further said, "I give and bequeath unto my brother Hugh McLaughlin all the interest I may have in the Fish Stand on Atlantic street, Brooklyn, and to his heirs and assigns forever."⁵ Mr. McLaughlin did a fair trade in fish and finally disposed of the business when certain Democratic politicians secured him an appointment as master foreman of laborers in the Brooklyn Navy Yard in 1855.

³ The author is indebted to Mr. William C. Courtney, son-in-law of Mr. McLaughlin, for much of the information contained in the above paragraph.

⁴ Neither Mr. Courtney nor Mr. Boody, a long time friend, had definite information about Mr. McLaughlin's education.

⁵ Liber XI, 333, *Wills*, Surrogate's Office, Kings County.

Entering politics as early as 1849, Mr. McLaughlin became a lieutenant of Henry C. Murphy, a local Brooklyn boss. In 1853 he won his first political victory by naming George Taylor as the Democratic nominee for Congress and attended his first state convention. At the convention he helped Murphy nominate John Vanderbilt for lieutenant governor. During this early period he also became a volunteer fireman and spent much of his time in the political atmosphere of firemen's hall in the basement of the City Hall. Upon entering the navy yard in 1855 Mr. McLaughlin handled the hiring of the civilian labor force. Because of the nature of the work he received the title "Boss," an appellation which, although gained outside the field of politics, remained with him in the days when he became political master of Brooklyn. As the years in the navy yard passed, the "Boss" built up a considerable following by judicious use of the jobs at his disposal. Toward the end of his navy yard career he established political headquarters at the "White House," a well known bar-room at Jay and Concord Streets which he had meantime acquired. The "White House" remained his headquarters until the day of the Kerrigan auction rooms on Willoughby Street.

Despite the fact that Mr. McLaughlin ran for the office of sheriff in the county election of 1860, he failed to win because of a split in the Democratic ranks. In the same year he sat as a delegate in the Democratic national convention and cast his vote for Stephen A. Douglas. The next year he had somewhat better success when he ran for the office of county register. He held the office of register of Kings County for two terms during the years 1861-1867, was defeated by Charles Schwrig in 1867, and piled up a plurality of 12,000 votes when he ran again in 1870. After 1873 he gave over the holding of public office to henchmen while he devoted his energies to directing the Brooklyn Democratic

organization from Willoughby Street. Orders which Mr. McLaughlin issued were usually known as "orders from Willoughby Street." His headquarters in Willoughby Street were quite near the city and county offices.

While McLaughlin bossed the navy yard, a Miss Sarah Ellen Kays, daughter of a Dutch farmer of Lafayette, New Jersey, whose forbears had resided in Suffolk County for almost two hundred years, came one day to see the sights afforded by the yard. In 1862, after Miss Kays had surrendered the Reformed faith of her family and become a convert to the Roman Catholic faith, she married the "Boss." Mrs. McLaughlin entered into the new religion with much enthusiasm, became one of the most active workers in Saint James' Pro-Cathedral, and sponsored Saint Mary's Hospital and Saint Vincent's Home for Boys. After her husband's death she erected the church of Saint Hugh at Huntington, Long Island, as a memorial and finally received the title of "marchioness" from Pope Pius X. Mrs. McLaughlin died in 1915.⁶ There were four McLaughlin children, one of whom, a son Harvey, died at the age of fifteen years in 1881. Two daughters survived their father. The elder married a well-known Brooklyn attorney, William C. Courtney, son of the Brooklyn judge. The younger daughter, Laura, married a physician.⁷

During the lordship of Mr. McLaughlin the Brooklyn Democratic organization quite closely resembled Tammany Hall, although it lacked the cohesiveness of that machine.⁸ A general committee, consisting of one delegate from each of the election districts of Kings County, theoretically di-

⁶ For further information concerning Mrs. McLaughlin, see *Brooklyn Daily Eagle Almanac*, 1895 (Brooklyn, 1895), p. 323; *Brooklyn Citizen*, December 8, 1904, p. 3; *New York Times*, April 3, 1915, 9:4; and *New York Times*, April 2, 1915, 8:3.

⁷ See *New York Tribune*, January 22, 1899, 7:5.

⁸ Estimate furnished the author by sometime Mayor David A. Boody, of Brooklyn and New York.

rected the work, but an executive committee, made up of the leaders of the twenty-one assembly districts, exercised the real authority. Each assembly district maintained its own committee and chose a local leader who had general responsibility for the results at election time. Like Tammany Hall, the Brooklyn Democracy also had a number of clubs which gathered voters together by various attractions.⁹ Mr. McLaughlin held no official place in the organization, except that for a time he sat as a member of the general committee, but he dominated because the twenty-one district leaders obeyed his orders.

Grouped around the "Boss" into a political ring were two members of the McLaughlin family and usually two or three outsiders. Hugh ("Bub") McLaughlin, a nephew who married Mrs. McLaughlin's sister as a second wife, acted as chief aide although he was older than the "Boss." He attended state conventions fairly regularly, served as fire commissioner of Brooklyn for a time, and also held the office of undersheriff of Kings County.¹⁰ "Aunt Nancy," an older sister of the "Duke," characterized by the *New York Tribune* as "a woman of extraordinary ability" before whom "the lesser lights of democracy quailed," planned much of the work and, although seldom seen or heard, "made and unmade many a man,"¹¹ The most important outsider, W. C. Kingsley, came to Brooklyn as a "poor school teacher" during the days when the "Boss" had just got his organization under way and the thread of control seemed likely to snap almost any moment. Mr. McLaughlin took care of Kingsley with paving contracts, and he in turn became the brains of

⁹ For additional information in regard to the Brooklyn Democratic organization, see *Brooklyn Daily Eagle Almanac*, 1895, p. 252; *New York Tribune*, October 20, 1903, 1:3; and *New York Tribune*, October 23, 1905, 1:5.

¹⁰ See *New York Herald*, March 5, 1899, sec. 3, p. 4.

¹¹ *New York Tribune*, November 1, 1896, sec. 2, 8:3.

the machine, being a "sagacious adviser and a born leader."¹² He carried on dealings with the public, raised money for running the machine, and laid more or less ingenious plans. Mr. McLaughlin later recommended him to President Cleveland for a cabinet post.¹³ Alexander McCue, born in Mexico, "cultured, wealthy, of fine appearance, shrewd, and reticent," also held an important place in the organization and received appointments from President Cleveland as solicitor of the treasury and assistant treasurer of the United States in New York.¹⁴ Lesser members ordinarily came and, after a time, vanished without ado. Thomas Kinsella, Water Commissioner W. C. Fowler, and Judge Fred Massey, all at one time or another held places in the machine. Patrick McCarren differed from these in that he finally wrested control for himself.

From 1862 until 1875 the McLaughlin organization controlled Brooklyn with difficulty. Exposures of corruption in the early seventies, brought on by the Tweed scandals across the river, caused much embarrassment as well as considerable loss of strength. In 1875 General Henry Slocum led a revolt which, although finally quelled, cost the 1875 election, brought defeat to Edward Rowe, the McLaughlin mayoralty candidate, and weakened the organization. By 1876, however, the uprising had been so far quieted as to allow Mr. McLaughlin to elect his ticket by small majorities ranging from three to five thousand votes.¹⁵ But the lull of 1876 did not prove permanent, and after the election of 1877 the *New York Tribune* in an editorial said of the McLaughlin organization, "now it has been finally broken—in fact it has burst."¹⁶

¹² *New York Tribune*, November 2, 1877, 4:4. Also see *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, December 8, 1904, p. 17.

¹³ See the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, December 8, 1904, p. 17.

¹⁴ *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, December 8, 1904, p. 17.

¹⁵ *New York Tribune*, November 9, 1876, 8:3.

¹⁶ *New York Tribune*, November 2, 1877, 4:4.

Nevertheless, the power of the Brooklyn "Duke" had not "burst" by any means. It rallied to such an extent that many felt confident it would be able to place its 1878 ticket in office in spite of the Flaherty revolt, and the defeat of that year came as an unexpected blow.¹⁷ At the Democratic state convention of 1879, momentous for the John Kelly bolt, Mr. McLaughlin appeared at the head of the Brooklyn delegation and pledged its vote for Lucius Robinson, the Tilden candidate.¹⁸ Again in 1881 the "Duke" headed the Brooklyn delegation to the state convention and remarked at its conclusion, referring to John Kelly, "We dealt a blow to the bolters and bossism which will have a good effect on the party."¹⁹ Although Mr. McLaughlin definitely preferred to confine himself to local politics, he counted as friends and supporters Horatio Seymour, S. J. Tilden, Grover Cleveland, and especially David B. Hill.

Away back in the seventies Thomas Kinsella had been a valued lieutenant of the "Duke." However, in the late seventies they split over a declaration made by Mr. McLaughlin concerning a prize fight at Coney Island in which Kinsella had an interest. The feud continued unabated for several years, and Mr. Kinsella led a disaffected Hancock-for-President faction into a new organization, known as "Jefferson Hall." Shortly before the election of 1881 a temporary compromise was arranged whereby the regular McLaughlin candidate, Mayor Howell, received the Jeffersonian support instead of General Slocum, who had been nominated at a great public mass meeting, in return for the promise of the "Duke" that a thorough reorganization of the party would be carried through after the election.²⁰ In spite of the agreement Mr. Howell lost out to Seth Low.

¹⁷ *New York Tribune*, November 7, 1878, 1:2.

¹⁸ *New York Tribune*, September 10, 1879, 1:2.

¹⁹ *New York Tribune*, October 13, 1881, 5:5.

²⁰ See the *New York Tribune*, November 2, 1877, 4:4, and May 8, 1880, 8:4.

According to promise Mr. McLaughlin resigned the leadership in 1881 with a statement, "From this time forth I propose to take only a citizen's interest in politics."²¹ Then the Jeffersonians placed a special primary law and registration provision on the statute book, and everything on the surface seemed to indicate that they would emerge with all the authority. However, the "Duke" lost no opportunity of strengthening himself during the critical period of house-cleaning and in the primaries and convention of 1882 completely succeeded in dominating.²² Every one of his candidates, with the exception of Thomas Carroll, a personal friend, gained election by majorities of from three to ten thousand votes. In 1883 McLaughlin named J. C. Hendrix as his candidate for mayor but narrowly missed electing him. In 1885 he elected D. D. Whitney to the mayor's office and from January 1, 1886, to January 1, 1894, "absolutely dominated the city government of Brooklyn," although Seth Low proved a powerful and piercing thorn in the flesh.²³ In 1891 Mr. McLaughlin won an outstanding victory in the election of David A. Boody as mayor.

After 1893 Mr. McLaughlin suffered a series of reverses. An intended purchase of the Long Island Water Supply Company aroused the ire of Judge William J. Gaynor who carried tidings to the public. The storm that ensued must have seemed everlasting to the "Boss," for long after the actual issue had been settled, the press continued to harp on his connection with the deal.²⁴

John Y. Kane of Coney Island had the distinction, enjoyed by his compatriot Timothy "Dry Dollar" Sullivan in New York City, of being the only Democrat in the Brooklyn

²¹ *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, December 8, 1904, p. 16.

²² *New York Tribune*, October 30, 1882, 1:4, and November 9, 1882, 4:1.

²³ *Brooklyn Citizen*, December 8, 1904, p. 3.

²⁴ *New York Tribune*, November 1, 1896, sec. 2, 8:4.

organization who dared to do as he pleased in the face of the "Boss." In 1893 Kane took it into his head to revolt, and all the machine candidates tumbled to defeat by more than thirty thousand votes. Under the combined weight of the water scandal and the Kane rebellion the "Old Man" announced his retirement from politics for the third time. Nevertheless, he appeared on the scene so lively in 1894 that a member of the board of education remarked that Democrats on the board did not dare to so much as vote for a janitor without McLaughlin's consent.²⁵ In 1895 the "Duke" selected E. M. Grout to head his ticket in the face of E. M. Shepard's displeasure. Consequently the Republicans elected F. W. Wurster as the last mayor of the city of Brooklyn by some 2,000 votes.

In 1896 Mr. McLaughlin reached his seventieth year of age and his thirty-fourth year as Democratic chief in Brooklyn. When he came into power, William M. Tweed had just begun his upward climb across the river in New York City. "Honest John" Kelly ruled with iron hand for fourteen years before Richard Croker came to the helm of Tammany. In 1896 Croker had been in power for a decade and was soon to make way for Charles F. Murphy. All through this changing of masters in Manhattan the "Old Man" continued steadfastly on his way.

Through the years from 1897 to 1900 Mr. McLaughlin enjoyed a rather restful time, although he actively opposed the inclusion of Brooklyn in Greater New York. He had lost some of his love for a fight and now preferred to win with less struggle. In 1899 a prominent Brooklyn attorney remarked that the staunchest friends of the "Boss" were to be found among the lawyers and the supreme court judges of Kings County. Concerning the lawyers he said, "There are a number of prominent Democratic lawyers in the

²⁵ See the *New York Tribune*, July 22, 1894, 20:2.

Brooklyn Club who want a nomination for the bench when the time comes, and if Mr. McLaughlin continues to hold the reins of power, they know their turn will come after a while."²⁶ To go back, in 1897, the first Greater New York election, Mr. McLaughlin placed Bird S. Coler as controller and E. M. Grout as borough president. In 1898 and 1899 he displayed slight interest in the elections, in spite of the somewhat insolent pose assumed by Tammany Hall.

The Devery scandal in the police department led Mr. McLaughlin to say, "Three things are certain in this world, death, the judgment day, and his (Devery's) removal. Devery reminds me of a very foolish intoxicated man who stood in the path of a locomotive. He shouted, 'Who's afraid?' Well, when the locomotive went by and he had lost a leg, he whined, 'What a fool I was.'"²⁷ In 1901 the "Old Man" maneuvered to have Bird S. Coler mayor, but Richard Croker objected, and McLaughlin, putting a precedent of long years aside, headed the Brooklyn delegation to the state convention in order that Coler might be nominated governor. The election of 1902 treated Coler rather badly, although Mr. McLaughlin piled up a plurality of 122,000 votes for him in Brooklyn.

Downfall as leader of the Brooklyn Democracy came to Mr. McLaughlin after Charles F. Murphy had ascended the throne of Tammany. The Hall had been in discouraging straits for sometime, and one of Mr. Murphy's plans for its resuscitation centered in the expansion of Tammany control to correspond more closely with the limits of Greater New York, especially in matters of vital import to the entire city. Because the "Old Man" did not lend his aid to such a plan, "Commissioner" Murphy incited Patrick McCarren to revolt and aided him to relegate Mr. McLaughlin. The

²⁶ See the *New York Tribune*, December 12, 1899, 2:5.

²⁷ *New York Tribune*, December 17, 1900, 2:1.

matter finally came to a crisis in 1903, when McLaughlin defiantly refused to support the Tammany candidates. When the question came to the county convention for action, the "Old Man" scored the first point, the convention upholding his position by a vote of 148 to 141. However, a few days later McCarren wooed the special committee of fifteen, to which the matter had been referred with power, and hence gained control. The "Old Man" sat playing at dominoes while the vote which determined his future was being taken and exhibited no great emotion when the result was announced. After a time he issued a statement in which he said: "If there was no other reason for opposing the Murphy conspiracy, there would be reason enough in the fact that it aimed a deadly blow at true Democracy. Murphy paid no attention to the sentiment of the party, but simply made up his mind to force a ticket of his own making on the party by means of the hard and fast Tammany vote in the convention. . . . I may mention an incident which sheds some light on the very peculiar notions which Mr. Murphy has of the common obligation to refrain from falsehood. After he had been twice at my house, he not only denied to the reporters for the press that he had been there but had the audacity to call me up through the telephone and ask me to join in the same falsehood. I have had many peculiar experiences in my time at the hands of so-called leaders, but never before had I been requested by a Democrat of distinction to unite with him in palming off a deliberate lie on the public."²⁸ Unmoved by this stinging rebuke, "Commissioner" Murphy characterized Mr. McLaughlin as a "rugged character and a sterling Democrat" with "pronounced capability as a leader."²⁹ The stand against Murphy and Tammany Hall led the newspapers to attach "Grand" to the "Old

²⁸ *New York Tribune*, October 28, 1903, 1:6.

²⁹ *Brooklyn Citizen*, December 8, 1904, p. 3.

Man" and make him the "Grand Old Man of Brooklyn." Instead of being a foe of good government, as he had been for many years in the eyes of the press, he now became the "exponent of independence and decency in politics."³⁰

Despite his defeat in the preliminaries the "Grand Old Man" took an active part in the campaign against the Tammany ticket. He attended a public meeting at the Academy of Music and issued a statement, calling upon his friends to rally to the cause.³¹ Nevertheless, Tammany won by a large majority even in Brooklyn, and Mr. McLaughlin's last hope flickered out. He retired from politics at the close of 1903 after approximately forty years of political lordship. Without politics to demand attention the year 1904 hung heavy on the "Grand Old Man" and made him somewhat bitter. However, he continued to keep regular hours at Kerrigan's auction rooms at 9 Willoughby Street. Active to the very last in spite of certain physical infirmities, he returned at 10:52 P. M. on December 7, 1904, from attending the theatre and died twenty-three minutes later from heart failure complicated by dropsy.³²

Described as "fine looking," Mr. McLaughlin possessed a large bodily frame, stood six feet in height, and weighed about two hundred pounds without being fleshy. He had a "ruddy face," a "long nose," an "eye that read into one's soul," "a jaw that denoted strength," "an active springy step," and dressed neatly.³³ Once in a while he paraded in a silk hat. Someone quaintly said that he could not boast of extraordinary mental powers but was "blessed with horse sense" and could "tell an honest man when he met one."³⁴

³⁰ *New York Tribune*, October 31, 1903, 3:1.

³¹ See the *New York Tribune*, October 28, 1903, 2:1.

³² *Brooklyn Citizen*, December 8, 1904, p. 1.

³³ *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, December 8, 1904, p. 1, and *Brooklyn Daily Citizen*, December 8, 1904, p. 3.

³⁴ *New York Tribune*, February 27, 1899, sec. 2, 6:2.

He was "very easy to approach," "a plain simple man," and belonged to the "common people." Living in a "fine high-stoop brown stone house in Remsen Street," he had very regular habits, arising at 7:30 A.M. every morning, and spent much time with his family.³⁵ Mr. McLaughlin read the newspapers assiduously and greatly enjoyed the theatre which he attended at least once each week. There are few records of public addresses, but he spoke with "great fluency." Although he reiterated again and again that he did not "intend to make the press the medium between himself and the public," he was famous for his parables which he spoke to newspaper men and which later found themselves into print.³⁶ One of his outstanding characteristics took the form of unceasing activity. When in his later years business affairs as well as political matters ran along smoothly without great need for attention, and time accumulated, he spent spare time soaking stamps off old letters and preserving them, although they had no value. A philosophic background, strengthened by whittling a stick, enabled him to stand on the sidewalk outside the building where the convention considered his fate and to play at dominoes when a subcommittee took the vote which ended his political mastery.³⁷ Most of those who knew the "Grand Old Man" considered him set in his ways and difficult to budge from what he considered the right.³⁸

Outwardly appearing a "mild, quiet, old man," Mr. McLaughlin actually earned the reputation of being an exacting

³⁵ Information available through the courtesy of Mr. F. W. Hinrichs, active in Brooklyn politics for many years.

³⁶ *New York Tribune*, October 8, 1903, 2:4.

³⁷ *New York Tribune*, October 20, 1903, 1:3, and October 22, 1903, 1:3.

³⁸ For the information contained in the above paragraph and not already acknowledged, the author is indebted to Mr. W. C. Courtney and to sometime Mayor David A. Boody.

master.³⁹ He maintained discipline with unbending rigor, demanding absolute obedience from one and all. An outstanding characteristic took the form of a memory that rarely forgot and a heart that seldom forgave. Punishment was sometimes delayed for years, but eventually the "Boss" inflicted it.⁴⁰ As he aged he became milder and seldom resorted to the harsher practices which had colored his earlier years. By the testimony of an opponent in politics, "he never broke his word to a follower or an applicant for office."⁴¹ The late Mayor David A. Boody said that Mr. McLaughlin asked only one favor during his years as mayor and that he denied. Mr. Boody also declared that "no man was more anxious to give Brooklyn good government than Hugh McLaughlin."⁴²

Although he had few open business connections, Mr. McLaughlin made considerable money, being a "conservative business man" with "a shrewd business head."⁴³ As early as 1869 he purchased property which later became the entrance to Prospect Park. He owned several parcels of land and at least two valuable residences on Remsen Street. Altogether Mr. McLaughlin accumulated a fortune of somewhat less than three million dollars, the bulk of which took the form of real estate holdings.⁴⁴ In the report to the surrogate's office the administrators declared bonds of the Union Elevated Railroad of Brooklyn, Brooklyn park system, United States Steel Corporation, and New York Gas and Electric Light, Heat, and Power Company and shares of the People's Trust Company, Nassau Electric Railroad, Brooklyn,

³⁹ *New York Tribune*, July 22, 1894, 20:2, and November 1, 1896, sec. 2, 8:3.

⁴⁰ See the *New York Tribune*, November 2, 1877, 4:4.

⁴¹ Testimony of F. W. Hinrichs.

⁴² Words taken from an interview with Mr. Boody.

⁴³ Characterizations of Mr. W. C. Courtney and David A. Boody.

⁴⁴ Estimate available through the courtesy of Mr. W. C. Courtney, son-in-law and also one of the administrators.

Queens County, and Suburban Railroad, and Coney Island and Gravesend Railroad to the amount of \$555,000 and cash totaling \$300,000.⁴⁵

Avocations held a considerable place in Mr. McLaughlin's life. He delighted in hunting, fishing, fine dogs, and flowers. Throughout his career he spent at least a month and sometimes as much as six months a year on sporting expeditions to various fish paradises scattered along the Atlantic seaboard from Maine to Florida, and on hunting trips to the Adirondacks.⁴⁶

Not many politicians or indeed many men have been more faithful to a church than Mr. McLaughlin. He was an ardent member of the Roman Catholic Church which he supported generously and attended faithfully. When Tom Kinsella back in 1880 sought to ridicule him for his church attendance, Mr. McLaughlin had the grace to reply before the general committee of Kings County in the following words, "If more people would go to church with their wives, there would be less divorce and fewer adulteries."⁴⁷ Both Mr. and Mrs. McLaughlin manifested especial interest in hospitals and orphanages and gave large sums for charitable purposes. Once on receiving an illegible lead-pencil letter in his morning's mail, Mr. McLaughlin asked Mr. Courtney, his son-in-law, to get him five hundred dollars from the bank. After lunch Mr. McLaughlin disappeared with the money. It later came to light that the money had gone to the widow of an old fireman whom McLaughlin had known in early days.⁴⁸ Apparently he paid for burying most of the poor Irish in Brooklyn, although so tactfully and quietly that few realized the generosity involved. Another favorite

⁴⁵ Surrogate of Kings County—Report on the Estate of Hugh McLaughlin.

⁴⁶ Information received from Mr. W. C. Courtney.

⁴⁷ *New York Tribune*, May 8, 1880, 8:4.

⁴⁸ Information available through the courtesy of Mr. Courtney.

charity to which the "Old Man" gave not only money but time was the Berkeley Institute for difficult girls.⁴⁹ Not long before his death Mr. McLaughlin presented Saint James' Pro-Cathedral with a marble altar costing more than fifteen thousand dollars.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Information received from David A. Boody.

⁵⁰ See the *New York Tribune*, March 23, 1903.

CHAPTER IX

"KING" JAMES McMANES

Away back in 1835 the Philadelphia councils enacted an ordinance which provided for the establishment of a gas works with a capital of \$100,000. The ordinance contained a clause to the effect that the city might at any time buy out the bondholders and take over the works and in addition set up a board of trustees, appointed by the city, to administer the property in the meantime.¹ When the city of Philadelphia, acting under the above clause, acquired the works in 1841, it continued the system of trustees, vesting in the select council the naming of six of the trustees and in the common council the other six. In taking over the works the councils passed an ordinance on June 17, 1841, which provided that the trustees "shall have the whole control and management of the said works, and of the said sinking fund, and of all other funds belonging to said works, and the said trustees shall pay no part of said funds nor any part of the profit of said works into the city treasury, but shall apply and appropriate the same, as directed by this ordinance, until the interest and principal of the said loans shall be fully paid."² The courts, in interpreting the ordinance, held that its provisions, which in reality made the trustees an almost independent and irresponsible body, should be effective until "all loans contracted for, or that may hereafter be contracted for, shall be fully paid."³ In as much as the board managed to

¹ See Wharton School of Finance and Economy of the University of Pennsylvania, Class of 1893, *City Government of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1893), p. 99.

² Wording taken from Henry C. Lea's *Citizens' Municipal Reform Association Reports on the Gas Trust*, Report I (Philadelphia, 1874), pp. 2-3.

³ See *Savings Fund v. The City*, 7 Casey, 175.

have outstanding loans all the while, the system could not be terminated until almost half a century had elapsed.⁴

After a time public sentiment demanded that loans required by the gas trustees should be handled by the city treasurer, but a loan of July 18, 1855, not payable until 1885, secured the board in power. The trustees exercised some influence in city politics from the very beginning. However, they did not acquire control of the city until the excitement of the Civil War engrossed the attention of the people of Philadelphia and discredited the Democrats. Prior to 1865 the twelve places on the board had been divided equally between the Republicans and the Democrats. In 1865 the Republicans took complete control of the board and soon thereafter began to dominate the city through its medium.

The gas trustees received no salary for their labors in connection with the board. Instead each expected one-twelfth of the appointments and contracts. In as much as approximately one thousand places were available, together with annual contracts amounting to some two million dollars, the office did not lack in returns.⁵ With the members of the board all Republicans and seeking to acquire influence in Philadelphia politics it is not strange that, after some struggle, one man should have reduced the others to subordinate positions and made himself all-powerful in the gas works as well as in city politics. Trustee James McManes achieved this feat.

James McManes came to Philadelphia from Ireland, but he differs from most of the Irish overlords in that he came from Ulster, professed the Presbyterian religion, and his

⁴ For further information concerning the early history of the gas trust, see E. P. Allison and Boies Penrose, "The City Government of Philadelphia," *John Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science*, Series V, Vols. I and II, 94, 198-204.

⁵ James Bryce, *The American Commonwealth* (3 vols., London, 1888), III, 20.

parents traced their ancestry to Scotland. He was born in Tyrone sometime in March of the year 1822, emigrated to Philadelphia with his parents when eight years of age, and settled in the midst of the textile plants of the Seventeenth Ward of Philadelphia "without money or without friends."⁶ After a brief time at school James, although not yet out of the elementary grades, went to work as a bobbin boy in the Southwark cotton mill of Samuel Clark. He pushed up through the ranks at the mill until at twenty-five years of age he had saved sufficient to begin spinning for himself on a modest scale. His business grew rapidly and enjoyed a good custom, but an unlucky fire burned it out. Then having little insurance, Mr. McManes found it necessary to take a place as foreman in the cotton mill of Thomas Herkimer on Water Street.

By 1855 he had saved enough again to leave the mills and set up a real estate business with Edward C. Quin. This venture not only made the nest-egg for his fortune but aided his political career which had begun half-heartedly some twelve years earlier. In 1844 McManes had received naturalization papers and joined the Whigs. When Winfield Scott made a campaign in 1852, Mr. McManes occupied a place of some importance in his Philadelphia cohorts. After Scott's defeat, he turned to the People's Republican ranks, organized a People's Republican club in the Seventeenth Ward with himself as president, and received a reward in the form of election as one of the school directors of the ward. He held this position eight years and in 1866 became a member of the city board of education. In 1858 he attended the sheriff's convention and swung his fellow delegates for William H. Kern, who belonged to a group

⁶ The commonly accepted date of James McManes' birth is March 31, 1822. However, the *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, November 24, 1899, p. 2, sets it as March 13, 1822. See the *New York Tribune*, November 24, 1899, 7:4, for the later date.

composed of McManes, William H. Kemble, Henry Bumm, H. C. Howell, and Alfred C. Horner—all of whom achieved political success by helping elect one another. The year 1858 also marked the beginning of Mr. McManes' dominancy in the Seventeenth Ward. Two years later, in 1860, he helped nominate Andrew G. Curtin for governor at the state Republican convention. More important still when he was a delegate to the national Republican convention he supported Lincoln for president. It is said that he highly prized a small medal which showed that he belonged to the group of original Lincoln delegates.⁷ As a reward for loyalty to Governor Curtin, Mr. McManes received an appointment as bank inspector of Philadelphia. In 1862 he became a candidate for the United States House of Representatives from the Third District but fell before Leonard Myers, the Democratic aspirant.

The year 1865 proved significant for Mr. McManes, for in that year he entered for the first time the ranks of the gas trustees as successor of Andrew Miskey. Almost at once he came to the fore. When an investigation ordered by the select council threatened embarrassment to the trustees, he, together with four colleagues, represented the board before the committee of the select council. At first he ignored the subpoena issued by the committee and later, when it came to examine the books of the trust, stubbornly refused to answer questions. When challenged for certain information, Trustee McManes replied, "The law says that we shall make a report to the council once a year."⁸ The investigation proved short of life, and the trustees resumed their business. "King" McManes, for he had now become sufficiently powerful to deserve such appellation, served at times as

⁷ *The North American*, November 24, 1899, p. 3.

⁸ *Report of the Special Committee to Investigate the Management and Affairs of the Gas Works, appointed by the Select Council March 29, 1866 (Philadelphia, 1867), p. 305.*

president and sat on two of the three committees of the board: the committee on works and the committee on distribution. He held a place as trustee continuously from 1865 until 1883, when war with State Boss Simon Cameron led to defeat for re-election. However, the next year he received election again and served until 1887 when the system came to an end.

At least three gas trustees ran for public office in 1866. "King" McManes aspired to the office of prothonotary in the district court and succeeded in obtaining the place. It is reported that his "administration was marked by careful attention and punctuality, and the various functions of the office were performed with regularity and correctness."⁹ From the year 1867 his power in city politics equalled and ordinarily exceeded that of any other person. He could usually control Republican nominations, and in Republican Philadelphia nomination as a rule carried with it election to office.

While Mr. McManes ruled Philadelphia, Lord Bryce wrote that "by the admission of his enemies, Mr. McManes possessed five qualities—personal capacity, courage, resolution, foresight, the judicious preference of the substance of power to its display."¹⁰ Governor Samuel W. Pennypacker later remembered him as "a thrifty, capable, and vigorous Irishman,—an absolute autocrat, who tolerated no difference of opinion in his ranks."¹¹ Judge James Gay Gordon, an associate for a score of years and a friend, characterized the "King" as "gentle and affectionate to his family and with all his friends," "particularly appreciative of any benefit done him," "private life exemplary in the highest degree," "devoted to home," "never profane," "simple and genuine," "manner of living—modest and moderate almost to aus-

⁹ *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 24, 1899, p. 1.

¹⁰ *The American Commonwealth*, III, 203.

¹¹ *The Autobiography of a Pennsylvanian* (Philadelphia, 1918), p. 176.

terity."¹² Outwardly Mr. McManes belied his imperious nature by a quiet and somewhat mild manner. Indeed, in spite of insistence on obedience, few ever realized how far he could go in vindictiveness and harshness because he possessed so much tact on ordinary occasions. Handicapped by lack of formal education, he made up for such want by "dogged perseverance," ability to judge and handle men, and a "happy faculty of forming attachments for great men who afterwards helped him."¹³ The "King" so impressed one student of politics that he wrote to the *New York Tribune* calling attention to his "methodical habits, and strict punctuality in keeping business appointments."¹⁴ Deliberate in speech and of Irish brogue, Mr. McManes retained his own counsel and seldom spoke in public. Yet he embodied fearlessness to such a degree that he carried on his battle in the open with a scorn for ambush and trickery.¹⁵ Withal he dealt generously with the poor and faithfully attended the ministry of the Presbyterian Church. A contemporary says that "he was a man of distinctly religious nature and was identified all of his life with the Presbyterian Church."¹⁶

Physically Mr. McManes was not especially conspicuous. Estimates of his bodily weight vary from one hundred and forty to one hundred and seventy-five pounds.¹⁷ He stood about five feet and eight inches in height. One of his contemporaries in Philadelphia politics describes him as "a man of medium height, stockily built, and probably weighing one hundred and seventy-five pounds."¹⁸ His family consisted of a wife and one child.

¹² *The North American*, November 24, 1899, p. 3.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *New York Tribune*, February 27, 1886, 4:5.

¹⁵ George Vickers, *The Fall of Bossism* (Philadelphia, 1883), I, 214.

¹⁶ Information secured for the author by Professor J. T. Salter, formerly of the University of Pennsylvania.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

The "King" manifested considerable interest in business. His real estate and street railway interests once bulked large but later were displaced by stocks and bonds. Setting out to acquire certain of the smaller street car lines of Philadelphia, he finally managed to merge all of the important lines into the Union Passenger Railway Company. In 1893 he served as president of the Empire Passenger Railway and as director of the Union Traction Company.¹⁹ After helping to organize the People's Bank, which had a capital and surplus of \$390,000, he became a director and later the president of the institution. Speculations involving M. S. Quay caused the bank to fail in 1897 while Mr. McManes acted as president. Although he personally was not cognizant of the policies of Cashier Hopkins, nevertheless, he felt obligated to the depositors and creditors and paid out of his pocket more than half a million dollars which represented some ninety per cent of all claims. The inventory and appraisement of his estate show that he left a fortune of \$2,486,205.73, of which \$2,372,688 consisted of stocks and bonds.²⁰ Among his interests as mentioned in the records of the estate appear stock in the following concerns: Pennsylvania Railroad, United Gas Improvement Company, Atlantic City Gas and Water Company, Union Passenger Railway, Real Estate Trust Company, Lehigh Valley Railway Company, Consolidated Traction Company, Allegheny Valley Railway Company, Barber Asphalt Paving Company, Steubenville and Indiana Railroad, West Jersey and Seashore Railroad, Equitable Illinois Gas Company, Philadelphia Traction Company, Metropolitan Street Railway Company, and the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railway Company.²¹

¹⁹ Gopsill's *Philadelphia City Directory, 1893* (Philadelphia, 1893), p. 2175.

²⁰ *Account Book*, CLXXVIII, 427, office of the Register of Wills of the City and County of Philadelphia.

²¹ *Ibid.*

Although the gas trustees paid for coal approximately one dollar per ton over the current market price and probably received most of it back in the form of a rebate, Lord Bryce doubted that Mr. McManes personally profited from this or from assessments levied on interests of the underworld.²² On the other hand Governor Pennypacker, although not in possession of definite information, thought that the "King" received a share.²³

The greater part of the "King's" political power came from his position in the gas trust, from leadership of the Seventeenth Ward, and from loyal support of influential friends, including favor at Washington at times. The works alone employed a force of from eight hundred to a thousand men, occupied property assessed at \$2,266,500, and purchased annual supplies amounting to some \$2,000,000.²⁴ In addition, by statement of the machine itself, the boss in 1879 controlled enough public jobs to bring the total number of persons dependent upon him to 5,630 with an annual payroll of \$3,877,316.82.²⁵ The jobs at Mr. McManes' disposal as president and director of street railways, president of the People's Bank, and stockholder in numerous other business enterprises would swell the number to a sizable army.

This army of jobs provided the very best fuel for the political organization which "King" McManes created. Few bosses have had more skilful lieutenants or supervised all with more vigilance than he. Every one of the more than seven hundred precincts of the city had organizations manned by leaders who represented them on the thirty-one ward committees. The ward committees held each local leader responsible for getting out the vote and in turn sent

²² *The American Commonwealth*, III, 203.

²³ *The Autobiography of a Pennsylvanian*, p. 176.

²⁴ Henry C. Lea, *Citizens' Municipal Reform Association Reports*, Report 1, pp. 8, 14, 15.

²⁵ *Ring Rule—Report of a Committee of 80,000* (Philadelphia, 1881), p. 22.

a ward representative to the central committee. Mr. McManes for many years occupied a place as leader of the Seventeenth Ward and its representative on the city central committee.

Republican nominating conventions followed "King" James' orders because he controlled the organization or machine which sent the delegates to the conventions. The greater part of these delegates held positions in the machine and hence in convention merely followed their regular master. In the Republican convention of 1881 which named a city ticket the 199 delegates included 86 city office-holders, 9 members of the city councils, 5 police magistrates, 4 constables, and 23 city policemen, or in all 127 who held office at the hands of the boss.²⁶ After the ticket had been selected, the machine did not usually have to exert itself, because the number of Republican voters so overwhelmed the Democrats. However, when the reformers stirred up the elements, Mr. McManes is alleged to have imported plug uglies at times.²⁷ Ordinarily he preferred to win or lose on the basis of a bitter but open fight. It has been stated that he could depend on a fraudulent registration which would increase the normal Republican vote by twenty per cent.²⁸

Altogether "King" James ruled without very serious interference from reformers until 1881. Reform organizations, such as the Citizens' Municipal Reform Organization and Committee of One Hundred, had a fitful existence through the seventies. Although they sometimes won a few offices, they could not seriously threaten the life of the machine. Occasionally the Democrats elected a candidate, as in the case of Robert E. Pattison who twice received election as city controller following 1877, but the Republicans elected the remainder of the ticket by comfortable majorities. One

²⁶ George Vickers, *The Fall of Bossism*, I, 128.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 56-57.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

of the reasons for this long-continued rule has been indicated in connection with the comment on the gas trust. Another hinged on the hesitancy of the merchants and manufacturers to break with the Republican local machine lest it have an ill effect on the national ticket and hence on the protective tariff.²⁹

In 1878 Mr. McManes elected Governor Hoyt over W. R. Leeds in a campaign between the "White Hats" and the "Black Hats." In 1880 he attended the Republican national convention as a delegate-at-large and as leader of the most powerful faction of the divided Pennsylvania delegation. Senator Cameron, the state boss and a long-standing political enemy of the "King," actively favored Grant for a third term, and perhaps for that reason Mr. McManes refused to throw his strength for Grant even though Cameron made dire threats and caused twenty-two other Pennsylvania delegates to do the same. At a strategic moment the "King" arose and read before the convention a manifesto denouncing a third term and as a result received much newspaper publicity as the one responsible for Grant's failure to secure a third term.³⁰ The "Old Man," as Mr. McManes now heard himself called, favored Garfield as a nominee and together with his followers voted for him.

When an unusually powerful reform movement arose in 1881, Senator Cameron extended his aid against Mr. McManes because of his failure to support Grant at Chicago. The machine assessed every office-holder thirty-five dollars and labor, attempted and almost succeeded in capturing the Committee of One Hundred, and finally suffered a bad defeat. The struggle became so bitter that the "King" slapped the face of E. Dunbar Lockwood of the Committee of One Hundred.³¹ After Rudolph Blankenburg had withdrawn in

²⁹ James Bryce, *The American Commonwealth*, III, 200.

³⁰ *New York Tribune*, May 8, 1880, 4:6, and May 10, 1880, 1:1.

³¹ *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, November 24, 1899, p. 2.

protest of the action of the reformers in endorsing Mayor Stokley for another term, the Committee finally rallied and nominated S. G. King for mayor and John P. Hunter for receiver of taxes. "Old Man" McManes elected only one of his candidates—the city solicitor. His other candidates lost out by pluralities of from six to twenty thousand votes.

After the ill-fated election of 1881 Senator Cameron continued his war, and the Committee of One Hundred maintained its organization. The result was that in 1883 Mr. McManes lost even his own office on the board of gas trustees. However, by 1884 the Committee of One Hundred had become somewhat quiescent, and the "King" returned to the gas board to remain until its abolition in 1887. In 1883 the "Old Man" supported General Beaver, in the same year he elected the city solicitor again, and in 1884 re-established himself completely by electing the mayor. The Committee of One Hundred disappeared after the defeat of 1884, leaving him to enjoy control of Philadelphia. In 1884 he again attended the Republican national convention.

A new city charter for Philadelphia had been drawn up in 1883 for submission to the state legislature. However, it had received little consideration at the session of that year. In 1885, when the relations between "King" James and the state boss became unusually strained, the charter passed the legislature at the order of the latter. Nevertheless, the enacting clause provided that it should not become effective until 1887.³²

At the Republican national convention of 1888 the "Old Man" again led the Philadelphia faction of the Pennsylvania delegation. M. S. Quay had in the meantime partially supplanted the Camerons as state overlord and demanded that Mr. McManes throw his votes for his choice. When the

³² For comments on this charter, see James Bryce, *The American Commonwealth*, III, 218-219.

"King" refused to comply, another bitter conflict ensued, in the course of which Quay threw his strength back of David Martin, a sometime henchman of Mr. McManes, and attempted to make him boss of Philadelphia in the stead of his master. The fight over this action, as well as over the city charter, caused the "Old Man" much distress. He did not lose out completely, but Martin, as collector of internal revenue, assumed some of the authority that had been formerly his. The strife between the "King" on one side and the state boss and David Martin on the other did not wane for many months.

Through the early nineties Mr. McManes devoted much of his time to numerous business interests. However, he found time to accept an appointment as vice-president and later as president of the commissioners of Fairmount Park. In 1893 the city directory lists him as engaged in the practice of law.³³

The election of 1897 brought happier times to the "Old Man." In that year his friends recaptured the Republican organization of the city, reorganized it, and he returned to a place of influence. Nevertheless, his control did not reach the absolute stage, as it had done before on occasion. The failure of the People's Bank in 1897 caused the old "King," now well along in his seventies, much concern, but he won an approbation that the press of Philadelphia had not usually accorded by repaying the depositors out of his own pockets to the extent of more than half a million dollars.³⁴ After a prolonged illness of three years "King" McManes died at the age of seventy-six, in November, 1899, from pneumonia and general old age, having retained to the end much influence in the Republican organization of Philadelphia.

³³ Gopsill's *Philadelphia City Directory*, 1893, p. 2162.

³⁴ See *The North American*, November 24, 1899, p. 3, and the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 24, 1899, p. 8, for press comments.

CHAPTER X

"JUDGE" ISRAEL W. DURHAM

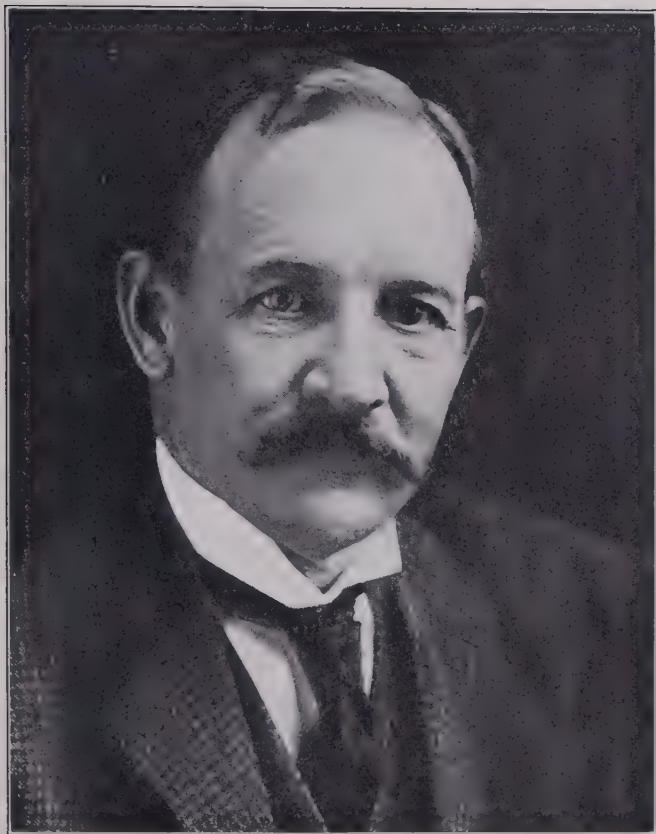
Israel W. Durham, generally known as "Judge" or "Iz," was born October 4, 1856, in the Seventh Ward of Philadelphia.¹ He came from a fairly large family of slight means, but his brothers and sisters without even ordinary advantages achieved beyond the average in later life. Thomas F. Durham, his father, who seems to have come to Philadelphia from Ireland, was apparently a native of England, while his mother, whose given name was Jane E., had belonged to the Norris family before marriage. Thomas F. Durham carried on a modest flour business as a means of livelihood and died in 1908 at the age of eighty-five years.²

Owing to poverty and perhaps to the thrifty soul of his father Mr. Durham's school career did not extend beyond the grammar grades of the Philadelphia public schools. Then he took a place as apprentice at brick-making. Having learned something about making bricks, he formed a partnership to trade in old barrels. In 1879 he obtained street-cleaning contracts with Thomas Parker and then having acquired an interest in a flour house devoted much of his time for many years to that business. He seems to have attracted a goodly amount of trade, for from such a modest beginning there developed the flour firm of Durham and Company which came to be well known in Philadelphia.³

¹ For this date see Smull's *Legislative Hand Book and Manual of the State of Pennsylvania, 1900* (Harrisburg, 1900), p. 121. The *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, June 29, 1909, p. 1, and the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 29, 1909, p. 2, favor October 24, 1856.

² Information about the Durham family has been received from Professor J. T. Salter, formerly of the University of Pennsylvania, and from the Philadelphia Bureau of Municipal Research.

³ For additional information on these years in Mr. Durham's life, see *Proceedings of the Senate of Pennsylvania in Commemoration of Honorable Israel W. Durham, Late a Senator from the Second District* (Harrisburg, 1911), p. 11.



Courtesy Philadelphia Public Ledger

ISRAEL W. DURHAM

Although holding that "politics is a business, and if you are going to dominate politics, you have got to give up everything else and cleave to that only," Mr. Durham did not surrender his business interests by any means.⁴ Indeed he did so well in business that he left an estate valued at \$1,054,292, which as a matter of record was more than Edwin H. Vare or James P. McNichol or Boies Penrose accumulated.⁵ In addition to the prosperous flour business which has been mentioned he "had in his later life undisclosed interests in several contracting firms" and owned a part of the Philadelphia National League Club.⁶

Nevertheless, if "Judge" Durham did not entirely surrender business interests, he did devote a very considerable portion of his time to politics from the time he reached legal age until thirty-two years later when he died. Strange to say Mr. Durham started out as a reformer in politics. In 1881 he aided a brother, John Wesley Durham, in making a campaign against the regular organization in the Thirtieth Ward for a seat in the council. On several occasions after he had climbed to a place of influence in political circles, he bolted the regulars and switched to reform groups in spite of a declaration that reform movements are "jokes" and "reform movements and women go together. Women and reformers regard politics as a social affair."⁷ Soon after 1881 he apparently decided to align himself with the machine, for shortly after that time he became co-leader of the Seventh Ward with Samuel M. Houseman. His rise in the organization was quite rapid, largely perhaps because of the favor which he found in the eyes of "King" James McManes

⁴ *New York Tribune*, November 28, 1903, 12:1.

⁵ Robert C. Brooks, *Political Parties and Electoral Problems* (New York, 1923), p. 220.

⁶ From a report made by Professor J. T. Salter.

⁷ *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, June 29, 1909, p. 2.

whom he supported through thick and thin, even in the disastrous days of 1887 when the gas trust ceased to be.

In 1885 Mr. Durham won his first election to public office, although he had unsuccessfully campaigned for a seat in the city council in 1884. The office was that of police magistrate. Because he was "lenient with offenders and always ready to oblige friends," he managed a re-election in 1890 and in 1895 received an offer of a third term.⁸ However, he declined the proffered nomination and began to devote more of his time to unofficial work of the machine. During his two terms as magistrate Mr. Durham built up a large following among the negroes who largely constituted the clients of his court.

As early as 1888 "Judge" Durham sat as a delegate in a Republican national convention. In 1896, 1900, and 1904 he also represented Pennsylvania at national conventions, although he had once said, "What do I care who is President, so long as I can carry my ward."⁹ He usually attended state and city conventions as a delegate but took little part in the proceedings on the floor, preferring to arrange matters privately with the members beforehand.

Along in 1895 Mr. Durham managed the unsuccessful Boies Penrose campaign for the office of mayor of Philadelphia and in the same year aided Mr. Quay in a bitter but victorious fight to name the chairman of the Republican state committee. The next year he put forth Alexander Crow, Jr., for the office of sheriff and elected him in the face of the regular nominee who had almost every advantage. By actively supporting Mr. Penrose, who contended against John Wanamaker for the seat in the United States Senate left vacant by the death of J. D. Cameron in 1897, Mr. Durham won the favor of certain powerful state interests. As

⁸ *The North American*, June 29, 1909, p. 6.

⁹ *Ibid.*

"maker" and agent of Mr. Penrose it seemed quite fitting that the Sixth Senatorial District should choose him to fill the unexpired term of Penrose in the state senate.¹⁰ At Harrisburg Mr. Durham exercised much influence in both houses. He had the reputation of not caring "how he voted on any measure if he could oblige someone" and became the Quay agent in the legislature.¹¹ In both 1899 and 1901 he came to the fore in the Quay struggles for re-election to the United States Senate.

Having aided W. A. Stone in his race for election to the office of governor, "Judge" Durham in 1899 received an offer of appointment as insurance commissioner of Pennsylvania. This office had rather great political possibilities because of its influence with the insurance companies carrying on business in the state and was also attractive because of the generous fees involved. Durham accepted the appointment as well as re-appointment from Governor Samuel W. Pennypacker. In an address before the state bar association Governor Pennypacker said concerning the Durham administration, "Insurance companies have reported to me that never before in its history has the work of the Insurance Department been so well conducted as by the present commissioner."¹² During the second term charges were made, although not substantiated, that the commissioner had employed improper methods in carrying on the business of his office.¹³ Therefore, in 1905 Mr. Durham resigned and recommended his sometime enemy, David Martin, to be appointed to fill the place.

At one time David Martin and Israel Durham had been allies and henchmen of James McManes. But in 1895

¹⁰ *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, June 29, 1909, p. 1. Also see *New York Tribune*, November 28, 1903, 12:1.

¹¹ *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 29, 1909, p. 2.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *New York Tribune*, July 2, 1905, 8:5.

Martin split with Senator Quay over the mayoralty election in which Boies Penrose and C. F. Warwick were the candidates, while Durham held loyally to Quay. In 1897 Boss Martin favored a thirty year lease of the gas works to the United Gas Improvement Company and carried his point in spite of the opposition of the "Judge" who paraded through the streets under the placard "No Boss Shall Rule This Town."¹⁴ Again in 1897 Martin supported John Wanamaker against Boies Penrose, Durham's candidate for the United States Senate, and thus the breach widened until for seven years the two were not on speaking terms. The quarrel reached its height when Durham finally succeeded in naming Samuel H. Ashbridge as mayor of Philadelphia in spite of the opposition of Mr. Martin. For some time after the Ashbridge coup "Commissioner" Durham moved along famously in the contest for domination, and there came a time when few thought that his rival would ever re-enter politics. Nevertheless, in 1904 Mr. Martin patched up his friendship with the "Judge" and became commissioner of insurance in his stead.

After breaking with David Martin "Judge" Durham associated James P. McNichol with himself in the city organization. Mr. McNichol controlled a prosperous firm of public contractors which had been unusually fortunate in obtaining city contracts in spite of lower bids from competitors. In return for the compliment of "Judge" Durham he inducted Mr. Durham into his firm as a secret partner.¹⁵

The policy of Philadelphia bosses has almost always been a highly practical one, to wit: to please the people by an ambitious and spectacular program of public improvements. Incidentally Philadelphia overlords have at the same time

¹⁴ *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, June 29, 1909, p. 2.

¹⁵ Thomas R. White, "The Revolution in Philadelphia," *Proceedings of the Atlantic City Conference for Good City Government* (Philadelphia, 1906), p. 145.

favored their own pockets and those of their friends with the profitable contracts involved. Mr. Durham was no exception to the rule, for he sponsored the erection of a large filtration plant for the city water supply. The contracts for the undertaking were, of course, largely awarded to the McNichol firm. Because costs mounted unusually high, considerable adverse sentiment arose, and an investigation followed. In 1906 after Mr. Durham had been discovered as a secret member of the firm, an unsuccessful suit to recover five million dollars, alleged to have been corruptly retained, was brought against him and Mr. McNichol.¹⁶ The co-defendants fought together for vindication, and in the senate memorial service for Senator Durham Mr. McNichol eulogized him as "his dearest friend . . . through the turbulence of the last fifteen years."¹⁷

Because of cheerfulness and a winning smile, which were heightened by an unusually fine physique and a radiant personality, "Judge" Durham attracted the largest personal following ever gathered by a Philadelphia boss. Colonel A. K. McClure once declared, "Everybody likes him, hundreds love him, and almost everybody calls him 'Iz'."¹⁸ One political contemporary describes him as "tall and well built" with "dark hair and blue eyes."¹⁹ Another remembers him as "rather heavily built, of medium height."²⁰ In his prime he stood forth "robust and ruddy."²¹

Governor William C. Sproul of Pennsylvania picked out "truthfulness, absolute fidelity to friends, and devotion and

¹⁶ *New York Tribune*, April 7, 1906, 1:4.

¹⁷ *Proceedings of the Senate of Pennsylvania in Commemoration of Honorable Israel W. Durham, Late a Senator from the Second District*, p. 12.

¹⁸ *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 29, 1909, p. 2.

¹⁹ Information supplied by the Philadelphia Bureau of Municipal Research.

²⁰ Information available through the courtesy of Professor J. T. Salter.

²¹ *The North American*, June 29, 1909, p. 1.

kindness under his own roof" as Mr. Durham's distinctive traits.²² Even Lincoln Steffens admits that he was "a high type of boss" under whom "there would have been no excesses."²³ However, the *Philadelphia North American* commented editorially: "Of the qualities of statesmanship he had none. He had no ideals. His ambitions were all selfish. He leaves no monument in the shape of a good statute or ordinance or any piece of constructive legislation, . . . no civic improvement or betterment."²⁴ A fellow politician characterizes him as "singularly modest and unselfish, with a gift of friendship which was unique in his generation."²⁵ Altogether "Judge" Durham commanded great skill in matters of organization, properly valued detail, and knew when to be daring and when to be cautious. He spoke simply, frankly, in a low voice, and on the whole infrequently and "wrote less."²⁶ Because he was happily endowed with a philosophical outlook on life, disaster came in quantity before it broke down his morale. He often quoted the lines from James Whitcomb Riley:

I've allus noticed great success
Is mixed with trouble, more or less;
And it's the man who does the best
That gets more kicks than all the rest.²⁷

"Judge" Durham prided himself on seeing everyone who desired to see him and invariably shook hands. He abstained from liquor, smoked incessantly, and he delighted in the theatre and baseball. At one time he held the presidency of the Philadelphia National League Club.

²² *Proceedings of the Senate of Pennsylvania in Commemoration of Honorable Israel W. Durham*, p. 16.

²³ *The Shame of the Cities* (New York, 1904), p. 216.

²⁴ June 30, 1909, p. 10.

²⁵ Information secured by Professor J. T. Salter.

²⁶ *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, June 29, 1909, p. 1.

²⁷ *Proceedings of the Senate of Pennsylvania in Commemoration of Honorable Israel W. Durham*, p. 13.

As a boss Mr. Durham was inclined to be easy. He led a very considerable following by personal charm and directed the work of the organization with comparatively little friction because of his skill in handling men of all types. He once declared that "aggressiveness and loyalty to one's friends are necessary to political success" and again that there can be "no sentiment in politics." He evaluated the common people thus, "I rely upon the common people. . . . It is the men from the river front, from the side streets, the laboring men who turn out on election day."²⁸ Mr. Durham's business ability has already been indicated. It may not be amiss to say that it apparently exceeded that of any Philadelphia boss since the days of "King" James McManes. It seems probable that the secret of his success in this field, as well as in politics, lay in assiduous industry which often brought him to his office before seven o'clock in the morning and in keen mental preparedness. These enabled the "Judge" to anticipate critical situations and arrange to care for them before they arrived. Then, too, he found it possible to carry on tremendous labor without undue fatigue.

Standing out as one of the very few bosses who did not marry, Mr. Durham showered much devotion upon his mother and father, brothers and sisters, and numerous nephews and nieces and frequently entertained his friends. He placed a brother on the board of tax revision and made another his secretary. Charitable calls received generous attention, especially if they came from the poor of Philadelphia. The Durham family occupied a prominent place among Philadelphia Methodists, Thomas F. Durham being a trustee of the Covenant Methodist Episcopal Church. The "Judge" belonged to the Masonic Lodge, the Fellowship Club, the Manufacturers' Club, and numerous other political and social

²⁸ *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, June 29, 1909, p. 2, and *The North American*, June 29, 1909, p. 6.

organizations. He spent vacations at Lake Placid and Moosehead Lake and belonged to the St. Luce Club at Indian River in Florida.

The Philadelphia Republican organization, as it existed under Mr. Durham, centered in a campaign committee made up of representatives of forty-two wards. Then it divided into forty-two ward executive committees and finally into a multitude of precinct committees, officials, and heelers.²⁹ While an "easy boss," Durham, nevertheless, exercised very careful as well as on occasion strict control over every part of the entire organization. By electing the ward representatives to the central campaign committee he managed to hold them responsible for results in the wards and expected them to exact a like responsibility from their subordinates.

Except that he led the Seventh Ward and represented it on the city central campaign committee, "Judge" Durham held no official place in the organization. However, as actual boss of the machine controlling the committees from the central campaign committee down, official place mattered little. Most of those holding the ten thousand jobs which he dispensed were expected to perform labor for the party, deliver so many votes on election day, and pay a campaign assessment to be used in carrying on the work of the machine. This even applied to teachers in the public school system.³⁰

"Judge" Durham's first significant success in the way of an election victory came in 1899 when Samuel H. Ashbridge, newly-elected mayor, recognized him as leader and refused to coöperate with David Martin. On the whole however, Ashbridge proved of little worth because of uncertain actions. Although at times not absolute master of the Republican

²⁹ Charles Richardson, "The Philadelphia Situation," *Proceedings of the Boston Conference for Good City Government* (Philadelphia, 1902), pp. 163-165.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 164-165.

organization, Mr. Durham controlled Philadelphia politics without important failure from 1899 until 1903. In the latter year he won perhaps his greatest victory in the election of John Weaver as mayor of Philadelphia. He had previously elected Mr. Weaver district attorney. Although Mr. Weaver was by no means a ward politician and eventually broke with the organization in 1905 over the prosecution of Councilman Caven and the gas lease, he acknowledged his debt to Mr. Durham, designated him the "Peerless Leader," and supported him with the understanding that he be allowed to bring about certain much-needed reforms in the city government. Recognizing the need for reform, Mr. Durham went to Europe in order that Mayor Weaver might have a free hand. After the changes had been made, he returned to Philadelphia and at the Fellowship Thanksgiving dinner walked arm-in-arm into dinner with the mayor.³¹

All through 1904 Mr. Durham managed to augment his power over Philadelphia until even the Democrats made overtures to ally themselves in return for certain concessions. However, in December, 1904, a committee of seventy citizens met to study city affairs and to consider what, if anything, could be done to improve them. The result was a new party, the City Party, and a rival set of candidates in the election of 1905. During the interval before the election the committee carried on elaborate investigations relative to the voting lists and found that many thousands of names of persons deceased, removed, and even non-existent were contained thereon. The committee found it possible to have more than fifty thousand such names struck from the lists.³²

In the meantime three situations arose to damage "Judge" Durham's chances of retaining his position as boss. In the first place his resignation from the office of insurance

³¹ *New York Tribune*, November 28, 1903, 1:3.

³² Thomas R. White, "The Revolution in Philadelphia," *Proceedings of the Atlantic City Conference for Good City Government*, p. 148.

commissioner under charges of improper administration diminished public confidence in Durham personally. A critical situation, even more important, developed in connection with the gas works. It is superfluous to note that the Philadelphia gas works have been a source of political difficulty for many years, for until 1887 they harbored a ring that completely dominated the city. Ten years after an uprising of citizens had abolished the system of irresponsible trustees, the works were leased to the United Gas Improvement Company for a term of thirty years with the privilege reserved by the city of concluding the lease and taking over the works in 1907. In 1905 the United Gas Improvement Company decided it would like to have the lease extended to the year 1980 with no reservations in favor of the city. It also asked to reduce the amount payable to the city for rental and to be allowed to fix rates at one dollar per thousand cubic feet until 1928 and at ninety cents thereafter. By devious ways the company gained the support of the city councils, but the idea of arbitrary rates over so long a period caused great indignation on the part of the consumers, and the newspapers took up the club. The third blow fell when Durham's relation to the McNichol contracting firm leaked out. Durham, McNichol, and John W. Mack had entered into a secret partnership as public contractors and secured lucrative contracts for the construction of an expensive city filtration plant in the name of McNichol. Later Durham and McNichol forced Mack out of the combine, thus causing much bitterness on his part. Mack joined the committee of seventy, financed the investigations that have been referred to above, and aided in the election of the City Party ticket in 1905. As an outcome of these three situations the machine went down to a complete defeat in the fall election of 1905.

Because of a break in health "Judge" Durham spent much of the year 1905 in Switzerland. He returned in July,

having cabled Sheriff Miles: "Notify ward leaders no reception, dinner, or special train. Give publication."³³ The following year seemed to promise happier times for the Durham forces. But before the storm had had time to subside, a suit brought against Durham and McNichol to recover approximately five million dollars in connection with the Torresdale filtration plant stirred up the elements again. For a time the prospects seemed to assure victory for the city and certain ruin for the defendants, but the tide turned, and Mr. Durham secured an acquittal. Again the City Party defeated the machine by more than ten thousand votes.³⁴

After 1906 Mr. Durham partially re-established himself in Philadelphia politics and in 1908 became a state senator to fill out another unexpired term. But illness and threatened arrest in connection with the filtration suit hindered political activity, and he remained away from Philadelphia from November, 1905, until November, 1908, for the greater part of the time. His power never again reached the point it had attained in 1903. In 1908 Mr. Durham returned to Philadelphia and threatened war on McNichol and the Vares who had been his former friends, but Mayor Reyburn patched up matters and prevented an open conflict. "Judge" Durham died on June 28, 1909, at Atlantic City from paralysis of the heart.³⁵ Senator Boies Penrose spoke his eulogy, "He had been my close personal friend for twenty-five years. We had taken fishing trips together and politically were thrown in each other's company continually. . . . 'Iz' was a loyal and courageous man, a brave fighter, and a sagacious leader."³⁶

³³ *New York Tribune*, July 18, 1905, 3:5.

³⁴ See the *New York Tribune*, April 7, 1906, 1:4, and the *Legislative Journal of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 1919* (Harrisburg, 1919), I, 519.

³⁵ *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 29, 1909, p. 1.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

CHAPTER XI

"DUKE" EDWIN H. VARE

The Vare brothers, otherwise known as the "Dukes of South Philadelphia," have been influential in Philadelphia Republican circles for many years. George became active away back in the early days of "King" James McManes and the gas ring. Edwin H. joined the ranks in the eighties and succeeded his brother in politics as the years passed by. William Scott Vare, the youngest of the triumvirate, carries on the family name today in Philadelphia and the state of Pennsylvania and hoped to sit in the Senate of the United States. In as much as Edwin devoted himself more largely to local politics, brought the family political fortunes from a relatively humble position to a very high one, and occupied a very prominent place in Philadelphia politics of the last generation, he has been selected to represent the family.

A product of the old Southwark District, then on the outskirts of Philadelphia, Eddie was born July 19, 1862, in a frame shack. His parents, Augustus and Abigail Vare, came from several generations of American stock. Augustus, a seller of charcoal and breeder of hogs, although hard working, attained no great degree of prosperity and died prematurely. Abigail Vare, a "faithful soul, plain, transparent, deeply spiritual, and with a perfect passion for Christian service," reared her family of ten children with care and became the beloved of her sons.¹ In addition to her three politically-minded sons Mrs. Vare had a son Henry, who died from a bite of a hog, a son John, who peddled coal oil, and one Thomas, mechanically inclined, who built wagons and spent some time inventing.²

¹ Bishop Berry's characterization of Mrs. Vare. See *Legislative Journal of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 1923* (Harrisburg, 1923), I, 1325.

² For additional information concerning Edwin Vare's parents and brothers and sisters, see *ibid.*, 1323; *The North American*, October 17, 1922, p. 4; and the *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, October 17, 1922, p. 5.



Courtesy *Philadelphia Public Ledger*

EDWIN H. VARE

Days at school ended for Edwin with the elementary grades.³ Then he labored on the Vare garden patch, dug cellars, and devoted a considerable part of his time to peddling vegetables through the streets of Philadelphia where they commanded a better price than on the farm. After a time he gave up the hawking of produce and became an ash man, gathering ashes from door to door and carting them to the city dumps.

George and Eddie Vare early became interested in local politics. They apparently first cast in their lot with Martin Slack, boss of Ward One and lieutenant of "King" McManes, and aided him in his struggle with the Democrats. When along in 1895 Slack decided to support C. L. Magee of Pittsburgh for the United States Senate, the Vares remained loyal to M. S. Quay, after a time made war on Slack with the help of Ollie Wilson, boss of the Thirtieth Ward, and emerged leaders of the ward. The Vares and Wilson, having gained political mastery, proceeded to set up a contracting business at 17 North Juniper Street, under the name of Wilson and Vare. Later Wilson dropped out, and the firm became Vare Brothers. The Vare firm, later bringing in William as a partner, prospered and after George's demise demanded the greater part of Edwin's time.

As soon as he became of voting age, Eddie received election to a seat on the executive committee of the first ward. George had been given a place in the house of representatives of the Pennsylvania legislature in 1891 and held the office until 1896 when he took for himself a seat in the state senate.⁴ In 1897 Eddie followed him in the house of representatives but soon resigned. He did not again assume

³ Smull's *Legislative Hand Book and Manual of the State of Pennsylvania, 1917* (Harrisburg, 1917), p. 1130.

⁴ See Smull's *Legislative Hand Book and Manual of the State of Pennsylvania, 1900* (Harrisburg, 1900), p. 1186.

public office until at George's death in 1908 he succeeded him as senator from the First District.

The Vares gradually expanded their political dominance from the First Ward over the southern part of Philadelphia, establishing themselves so securely in this area that for approximately thirty years they knew only one or two defeats.⁵ However, disputing factions in the city Republican ranks long limited their hold to South Philadelphia. They managed to gain the upper hand in the struggle with Boies Penrose, and during the years following 1910, when James P. McNichol, otherwise known as "Sunny Jim," turned from them to an alliance with Penrose, they were able to seriously cripple his efforts and established themselves masters as nearly absolute as any Philadelphia has had since 1890.

Altogether the Vare brothers sat continuously in the legislature of Pennsylvania for somewhat more than thirty years. As a representative and later as a senator, George served from 1891 until his death in 1908. Then Edwin assumed the senatorial seat and held it until his death in 1922. Finally William resigned a seat in the United States Congress and completed the unexpired term of his deceased brother. Edwin Vare made an especially conspicuous record in the senate and once remarked that he "would rather be a Senator from the First Senatorial District of Pennsylvania than be its Governor."⁶ At his death Senator T. L. Eyre, president pro tempore, characterized him before an open session of the senate "as the undisputed leader."⁷

In running for the senate Mr. Vare experienced no great difficulty in securing the support of his constituents even in the years when the Democrats were especially strong. For

⁵ See *Legislative Journal of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 1923*, I, 1328.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1323.

example, in the 1912 election, which the Democrats claimed almost everywhere, he received 18,336 votes to the 5,785 votes polled by his Democratic opponent.⁸ On the floor of the senate Mr. Vare ordinarily acted as Republican and hence majority leader. Thus in 1913 he introduced the resolution naming the officers for the session, made numerous motions to lay on the table, reconsider, or adjourn, and acted as chairman of many committees of conference to settle disputed matters.⁹ All told he sponsored a good many measures of considerable moment, spoke on almost every bill of any importance, and frequently reported for the committees of which he was a member. Perhaps he exerted greatest influence in the committee room, for he had assignments of the first rank and labored faithfully with them. In 1913, for example, he received appointment to the committees on appropriations, city passenger railways, corporations, elections, insurance, law and order, public printing, and public supply of light, heat, and water. In addition he acted as chairman of the important committee which handled those bills relating to municipal affairs.¹⁰

The character of measures receiving the backing of Eddie Vare is noticeably higher than that of the legislation sponsored by the general run of political bosses. William Flinn, well-known boss and later reformer of Pittsburgh, declared that "although not regarded as a progressive, he supported the progressive legislative program, including the child labor, women's hours of labor, workmen's compensation, and public utilities measures."¹¹ One of the "Little Fellow's" bills provided for commissioners to promote uni-

⁸ *Ibid.*, 1913 (Harrisburg, 1913), I, 2.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 1913, I, 6, 7, 1372; II, 1615, 1762, 2459; III, 3091; and IV, 5087-5088.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1913, I, 4, 41, 42.

¹¹ *The North American*, October 17, 1922, p. 8.

formity of legislation among the several states.¹² Without his support and vote neither the Eighteenth nor the Nineteenth Amendments to the Constitution of the United States could have been ratified by the legislature of Pennsylvania.¹³ During his years in the senate, and only one of his colleagues surpassed them in number, numerous measures designed to better the conditions of women and children who labor came up for consideration. Mr. Vare not only voted for but worked for practically every one of them. On a general ten hour day he addressed the senate thus, "No sensible man would try to work men more than ten hours; they are not much use after that. When you get ten hours out of a man you get all that is in him, all that he is willing to give you."¹⁴ On child labor he said, "There is not a Senator sitting in this room who would let one of his children work more than ten hours in a factory. . . . I wish to announce that I did the same thing (work more than ten hours before the age of sixteen years), but I would like to have laws passed to have it stopped."¹⁵ Obviously in many cases his fellow senators refused to uphold wishes of this character. Nevertheless, even opponents in the senate paid their tribute as "so eminent a gentleman," "so kind a man."¹⁶

Physically Mr. Vare rather belied his role as political overlord and hence received designation as the "Little Fellow." With his one hundred and forty-five pounds of weight and five feet and five inches of height, he was the smallest in stature of the twenty bosses under consideration. One of his legs happened to be shorter than the other and caused a "slight limp in walking."¹⁷ A smooth, massive face

¹² *Legislative Journal of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 1913, I, 201.*

¹³ See *ibid.*, 1923, I, 1325.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1913, III, 4371.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1913, III, 4448.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Information available through the courtesy of Professor J. T. Salter.

and a head with close-cut hair were usually crowned with a derby hat.¹⁸ A striking personality, which combined "loyalty, fearlessness, and sagacity" with "fine executive" ability and tremendous energy, made up for any lack of distinction in physique.¹⁹ Underneath a somewhat hard exterior, for the "Little Fellow" was "by no means a cordial, gracious man," he actually maintained without "pretense or sham" a large reserve of sympathy.²⁰ He was not adverse to receiving advice and made the boast that he gave an interview to anyone who presented himself for that purpose.²¹ Mr. Vare did not drink liquor nor smoke tobacco and disliked profanity.

It cannot be said that Mr. Vare was garrulous, although he spoke frequently on certain matters. His speech, which was plain, concise, and straight to the point, generally received marked attention whether it was delivered in senate or party councils of Philadelphia and caused him to create "more enthusiasm at city conventions or Republican gatherings than any of the orators."²² He failed to win a reputation as a silent boss, largely because his personal views were so pronounced that he found it difficult to remain silent on any important matter. Tenacity to what he considered the right made him adverse to compromise and his career full of storms.²³

Demanding obedience and generally obtaining it, Eddie Vare stood four-square as a strict master without being harsh. Even after breaking with "Sunny Jim" McNichol, he remained his personal friend and business associate during

¹⁸ *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, November 18, 1917, p. 6.

¹⁹ Senator Pepper's characterization to be found in *The North American*, October 17, 1922, p. 5.

²⁰ *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, October 17, 1922, p. 5.

²¹ *The North American*, October 17, 1922, p. 4.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ See the *Legislative Journal of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, 1923, I, 1325, 1326.

many years of strife. It has been said that "few men in Philadelphia history had so many staunch friends, and none as many fervid and implacable enemies" as he.²⁴ Generally speaking, if Mr. Vare could have his own way, he would deal unusually tolerantly with any and all. Since he managed to have his own way much of the time, he got along with most of his colleagues and henchmen rather well and even on occasion gained a reputation for mildness. Boies Penrose made one exception to the above statement, for war raged almost continuously between the Vares and the Penrose forces.

Above all Mr. Vare succeeded admirably as an organizer. He established the Vare Republican Association, the Vare Republican League, and long served as president of the Union Republican Club of South Philadelphia. Then, too, he devised and maintained an efficient system for getting out one hundred per cent of the vote. A Philadelphia bishop once said that "Duke" Vare "won and held men by literal battalions."²⁵ Mayor W. A. Magee of Pittsburgh designated him as a "leader of leaders" and urged that he assume the place in the state left vacant by the death of Boies Penrose.²⁶

The contracting company directed by the Vare brothers prospered on both public and private business. It carted away snow from the city streets in winter and kept the streets clean in the summer. In 1917 the company received street cleaning contracts involving \$491,000 and \$570,000 and rubbish removal contracts calling for payments of \$135,000 and \$155,000.²⁷ It built and constructed for the city of Philadelphia, according to the *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, to

²⁴ *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, October 17, 1922, p. 5.

²⁵ *Legislative Journal of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, 1923, I, p. 1325.

²⁶ *The North American*, October 17, 1922, p. 4.

²⁷ *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, November 17, 1917, p. 4.

the extent of some twenty million dollars prior to 1921.²⁸ One of its large private contracts was with the Bell Telephone Company and called for the digging and laying of conduits. Despite the large business carried on by his firm, Mr. Vare left an estate valued at \$595,191.²⁹

Although an unusually shrewd business man, Senator Vare gave so heavily to various charitable enterprises that he became known as the "Apostle to the Poor." He prided himself on disposing of all salary money received from the state of Pennsylvania and in addition contributed many thousands annually from his private income to charitable institutions and to individuals seeking aid. It has been estimated that his benefactions totaled more than one million dollars.³⁰ The salary as state senator went in equal portions to a Jewish, a Roman Catholic, and a Protestant hospital. In the year 1919 he gave three thousand tons of coal to the poor of the First Ward and during the summer season usually made it possible for some five hundred women and children to enjoy a respite from the heat of Philadelphia at Atlantic City. Among other things the Abigail Vare Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church of Philadelphia stands as a monument to his generosity.

Belonging to no particular religious denomination, "Duke" Vare, nevertheless, attended the Methodist Church as a lad and maintained some interest in religious matters throughout life. Bishop Joseph Berry of the Methodist Episcopal Church enjoyed some intimacy with him and conducted the funeral service at his death. According to Mr. Berry "nothing appeared to so fascinate him as the religious

²⁸ October 17, 1922, p. 1.

²⁹ Robert C. Brooks, *Political Parties and Electoral Problems* (New York, 1923), p. 220.

³⁰ *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, October 17, 1922, p. 1.

conversation and prayers of those who ministered to him. He joined eagerly in the prayers that were made for him."³¹

Family ties held the "Little Fellow" strongly. He spent much time at the family home at Ambler, where he had a house and sixty-seven acres of grounds valued at more than \$450,000, and in the summer at the vacation place at Vassar Square in Atlantic City.³² To protect his place at Atlantic City Mr. Vare engaged in a long legal battle with A. S. Lambert who erected a spite fence on a narrow strip of ground which separated the Vare place from the ocean.³³ Not only was he devoted to his wife and six children but to his mother and two brothers. Mrs. Edwin Vare played golf and enjoyed a reputation as a sportswoman. Edwin H., Junior, a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, associated himself with his father in the contracting business. Because of implicit trust in one another the brothers transacted their partnership business, which ran into large sums, without written or formal contract. The "Duke" seldom took vacations, because he felt the necessity of being eternally on the lookout for political opportunities or pitfalls. However, he did find some time for horse-back riding, of which he was very fond.³⁴

The Philadelphia Republican organization under "Duke" Vare presented almost as elaborate a system as Tammany Hall in New York, although it differed from Tammany in certain respects. Instead of the assembly district which forms the units in New York City, the Philadelphia Republican machine uses the precinct or district. These districts are subdivisions of the several wards. Under Vare they numbered in each ward from nine to eighty-two. In the en-

³¹ *Legislative Journal of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, 1923, I, 1325.

³² See the *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, October 17, 1922, p. 5.

³³ See the *New York Times*, July 24, 1917.

³⁴ *The North American*, October 17, 1922, p. 4.

tire city they numbered 1464 and each had a district committee which took in every qualified voter of Republican persuasion. Above the district organization and overseeing it stood the ward machine, with a ward executive committee composed of two representatives from each district therein, elected at the primaries. Each of the forty-eight wards in turn chose one person to represent ward interests for one year on the central campaign committee, which held control of the city Republican organization as the executive committee does in Tammany Hall. The representatives from the wards were actually the ward bosses, but they could be displaced theoretically at any time by a two-thirds vote of the ward executive committee.³⁵ Mr. Vare represented the Thirty-ninth Ward on the central committee for many years.

On the whole the Vares more completely dominated Philadelphia during the later years of Edwin H. than any other leader or faction since 1890. In South Philadelphia they ordinarily suffered little opposition and usually held absolute control. However, in the northern and western parts of the city the Penrose forces, together with certain independents, disputed mastery with them. The "Little Fellow" first openly aspired to be city-wide boss in 1911. By 1916 he had largely realized that ambition. During the years from 1916 to 1922 the Vare control strengthened itself materially and at Mr. Vare's death stood at a very high point. Since 1922 William S. Vare has rather successfully maintained the influence won by his brother, in spite of many attempts on the part of opponents to cause his downfall. At the "Little Fellow's" death the *Philadelphia Public Ledger* attributed to him control of "a working majority in the city council, four out of six Philadelphia representatives in Congress, five out of eight state senators, thirty-three out of

³⁵ See the *New York Times*, September 22, 1927, p. 7, and Robert C. Brooks, *Political Parties and Electoral Problems*, pp. 187-189.

forty-one state assemblymen, the recorder of deeds office, the receiver of taxes office, the city treasury, the register of wills office, the coroner's office, a majority of the county commissioners, a majority of the magistrates, and the office of sealer of weights and measures."³⁶ The president pro tempore of the state senate announced before an open session of that body in 1923 that Mr. Vare had been the unquestioned leader of the senate.³⁷ Nevertheless, the "Duke" had his troubles. In 1911, the year in which he first entered the lists as a contender for the control of the entire city, he ran William S. Vare for mayor, met a bad defeat, and "it seemed as if his leadership was certain to be swept away by the movement against himself and his candidates."³⁸ But Mr. Vare managed to rally his resources in the face of great obstacles and eventually pushed on to the lordship. Even after he had largely realized his ambition to be boss of the entire city, he lost the street cleaning contracts for a time and in 1919 failed to check the passage of a city charter bill which displeased him.

One of the things that helped keep "Duke" Vare in popular graces took the form of an emphasis on "giving the people something they can see." Essentially practical, he realized that the ordinary citizen judges a government by tangibles which he can view with his own eyes. Therefore, Mr. Vare caused schools, parks, playgrounds, recreational centers, electric lights, and sewers to be constructed. Curiously enough he named one public school building the "Abigail Vare" and another the "George A. Vare." His pet scheme centered in a high and manual training school for South Philadelphia. The newspapers opposed such an undertaking on the ground that it was sectional, but Mr. Vare

³⁶ See *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, October 17, 1922, p. 1.

³⁷ *Legislative Journal of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, 1923, I, 1323.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 1325.

refused to budge, the school materialized, and the "Little Fellow" gave a gold medal every year to the boy making the best record.

Although Mr. Vare announced in July, 1922, that he was "good for twenty-five years more," he became ill in August of the same year from a complication of maladies. His condition did not seem serious in view of the fact that he had been more or less ailing for two years, but on October 16, 1922, he suddenly died at the age of sixty.³⁹

Governor Gifford Pinchot, usually a political opponent of the Vares, in 1923 paid Edwin H. as high a tribute as perhaps has ever been given a boss by a leading champion of good government. He said, "As I had followed the career of Senator Vare even before I knew him personally, there stood out of it his consistent championship of all human measures. He was for workmen's compensation, he was for good child-labor laws. Point by point as you followed his career you found him standing on the side of those who had little, when the issue arose as against those who had much. It was the progressive tendency of his stand in the Senate which attracted me to him most before I knew him."⁴⁰

³⁹ See the *New York Times*, August 22, 1922, 17:6, and October 17, 1922, 19:4; *The North American*, October 17, 1922, p. 1; and the *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, October 17, 1922, p. 1.

⁴⁰ *Legislative Journal of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, 1923, I, 1329.

CHAPTER XII

CHRISTOPHER LYMAN MAGEE

From the days of Thomas Nast and his famous cartoons of Boss Tweed, municipal overlords have received much attention from newspapers. Indeed their countenances, with the ridiculous magnified a hundred times, have peered forth from front pages of daily papers at frequent intervals. Chris Magee received due attention from the press in spite of the fact that he owned and for a time edited a newspaper himself and was chosen president of the Pittsburgh Press Club. Nevertheless, after twenty-years of leadership over Pittsburgh a rival newspaper dared to eulogize him as the "most remarkable character the city has produced," and he impressed many of his fellow-citizens as the leading and most public-spirited resident of the city.¹

"Senator" Magee, whose given names were Christopher and Lyman, came of a family with long American as well as Pittsburgh residence. A great-grandfather, David Hogg, seems to have been a relative of Captain Peter Hogg, an associate of George Washington in the French and Indian War. One account mentions him as a lawyer who lived near Staunton, Virginia, while another reports him as a native of Chester County, Pennsylvania, who moved on to Lancaster and finally to Pittsburgh in 1774. He is supposed to have been with the American army at Valley Forge, seems to have occupied himself as a trader in Pittsburgh, and records show that he purchased a lot in Pittsburgh on May 27, 1794. He sired three children and left at his death on February 9, 1800, a wife who lived to be one hundred years old. The Hogs were Scotch Presbyterians. Another great-grandfather, Robert Magee, was born in County Derry, Ireland, in 1737, of Scotch parents, married Jane Jack, and came to Pennsylvania

¹ See the *Pittsburgh Commercial Gazette*, March 9, 1901, p. 1.

in 1786. This ancestor had nine children and displayed some interest in politics by winning election as county commissioner in 1815. Samuel Magee, the grandfather of Mr. Magee, was born in 1775 apparently in Ireland and died in 1836. Christopher Lyman, his son and the father of Chris, was born in Pittsburgh in 1808, learned the hatter's trade, carried on a business in hats with an uncle, went into the field as sutler during the Civil War, and died of the fever in 1863. He first married Amanda Reno who died in 1840 and second Elizabeth Steele, mother of Chris, an Englishwoman born at Barrow-in-Furness, Lancashire, England, on March 9, 1814, who arrived in Pittsburgh on September 20, 1819, and died on March 19, 1887.² Christopher, born in Pittsburgh on a Good Friday, April 14, 1848, in a house on High Street, belonged to a household which included five children, three of whom were younger than himself. A brother, Fred, deserves mention because of subsequent activity in politics. The father, dying in the fifteenth year of Chris, left his family no great competence.

In a brief outline of his life which appeared in the *Legislative Hand Book and Manual of the State of Pennsylvania* for 1900 Mr. Magee wrote that he was "educated at the Third Ward School, Pittsburgh High School, and Western University."³ He apparently first attended a parochial school but on being whipped turned to the third ward public school. For a time he also studied at a private school kept by a Professor John Barry in the Wesleyan Methodist Church. He entered high school in September, 1860, was not graduated, and continued as a special student at Western University. At the death of his father he went to work as office boy for Park, McCurdy, and Company, iron makers.

²For further information concerning Magee ancestry, see *Pittsburgh Press*, March 9, 1901, p. 11, and the *Pittsburgh Chronicle Telegraph*, March 9, 1901, p. 5.

³See p. 1161.

In 1864 he found a job in the office of the city controller, and in 1869 entered the city treasurer's office.

Members and relatives of the Magee family had occupied places of some prominence in Pittsburgh politics for many years before the appearance of Christopher. On the maternal side an unmarried uncle, Squire Thomas Steele, held the office of alderman, served for a time as president of the city council, later administered the office of city controller, and altogether acted as a boss on a limited scale during the early years of the future overlord. Indeed it was through Squire Steele's influence that a job opened in the controller's office and later in the treasurer's office. Nevertheless, once at the job Chris worked faithfully and in his twenty-second year obtained an appointment as cashier of the treasurer's office. In 1871 he made a race on the Republican ticket for nomination as city treasurer and in the following election won against his Democratic opponent. This election deserves mention. Although Magee was barely twenty-three years of age, he received 5,963 votes as against 4,861 votes polled by J. H. Stark, cashier of the Artisans' Bank, while the head of the ticket went down to defeat by approximately fifteen hundred votes.⁴ In 1873 Magee again ran for city treasurer and polled 2,667 votes more than F. L. Ihmsen, his Democratic opponent. In the same year he secured the passage of a law which revised city assessments and jumped the valuation to 172 million dollars. He also sponsored a series of delinquent tax laws by means of which the city recovered some \$800,000. During his term as treasurer Mr. Magee reduced the city debt from fifteen to eight million dollars.

During the years in which he served the controller and treasurer in one capacity or another Mr. Magee managed to build up a sizable following which later proved helpful in his career. But more important even than the personal fol-

⁴ See *Pittsburgh Press*, March 9, 1901, p. 11.

lowing was the formulation of a plan by which he hoped to dominate not only one office but the entire city government. At the conclusion of the second term as treasurer he determined to accept no more full-time public offices and having laid down his duties as office-holder, began to devote his entire time to bringing the city under control.

In the years following the Civil War, Pittsburgh grew very rapidly and in the decade 1870-1880 so concentrated its attention on expanding industries and business that it had little time to devote to the problem of municipal government. In those days the two political parties approximately equaled each other in strength. Sometimes one succeeded in winning a city election and sometimes the other. Ordinarily neither could carry the entire ticket.

One of the first happy incidents in the enterprise of taking over the government of Pittsburgh, a political contest in 1879 between one of Magee's brothers and William Flinn for mastery of the Sixth Ward, finally resulted in a partnership between Magee and Flinn which worked out very well indeed. Mr. Flinn aspired to a seat in the state legislature contrary to the plan of Mr. Magee. Strangely enough the two were brought into alliance largely through the mediation of their later arch enemy, Matthew Stanley Quay.⁵ Chris Magee had a carefully prepared plan for the undertaking, commanded a sizable political following, and possessed such personal charm as to make him somewhat of a popular idol. However, he needed a strong organizer who could awe men into obedience and weld them into a powerful political machine. William Flinn not only proved himself to be such a man but enjoyed a better standing with the state machine and hence could get favors not available to his partner. Therefore, the alliance flourished and maintained itself with-

⁵ See *Pittsburg Post*, March 9, 1901, p. 3.

out a break in spite of critical moments for more than twenty years until cut short by death.

The first goal of the plan lay in the control of the city councils, because under the existing charter they exercised much of the administrative and executive as well as the legislative power belonging to the city.⁶ Mr. Magee realized this ambition, but it proved somewhat of a disappointment all in all. The councils were so large and unwieldy that he enlarged his program to include a new city charter which would center most of the executive and administrative power in three department heads. In 1887 the state legislature enacted the charter as law. It provided for a department of public works, a department of public safety, and a department of public charity and assigned to the heads of these departments the greater part of the city authority.

Another goal, which received attention at this stage, embraced the scuttling of the city and county Republican organizations along with their subsequent control. With the county organization in hand as early as 1874 when he managed to control the Republican county executive committee by a vote of 105 to 26, Mr. Magee speedily took over the management of the offices and patronage of Allegheny County, and the county thereafter remained a stronghold even on those infrequent occasions when the city wavered in allegiance. Becoming powerful in city politics along in 1877, Mr. Magee finally achieved dominance in 1882 when William Flinn became chairman of the city Republican executive committee, a position which he held continuously for twenty years.

With control established in city and county it yet remained to secure such dominance by welding the interests of important business and commercial concerns with those of

⁶George W. Guthrie, "Municipal Condition of Pittsburgh," *Proceedings of the Fourth National Conference for Good City Government*, 1896 (Philadelphia, 1896), p. 149.

the bosses. In this matter "Senator" Magee and his associate proved themselves adepts, for they studied the peculiar needs of such concerns so carefully that they met with little difficulty in convincing them that they could manage their political business with a minimum of expense and publicity and a maximum of efficiency.⁷ By placing public securities and monies expeditiously in banks and brokerage firms the financial world joined with the bosses to guarantee their dominance. Privileges in crossings and trackage rights won over the steam railways to such an extent that the Pennsylvania Railroad is reported to have made Mr. Magee its agent in Allegheny County and later in the entire state of Pennsylvania.⁸ Similarly franchises of one kind and another won over the street railways and many of the public service corporations to the support of the Magee-Flinn organization. Not only did this community of interest minimize the danger of a fatal revolution but it opened thousands of jobs to be used as fuel for the political organization.

Attending a Republican national convention as early as 1876, Chris Magee sat as a delegate in every such convention until his death. In the 1880 convention he held some prominence as a Grant supporter. Four years later he served as national committeeman from Pennsylvania and supported Arthur in the convention, in 1888 he swung the Pennsylvania delegation from Sherman to Harrison, and in 1892 led the Harrison forces in the convention. In 1896 Mr. Magee favored McKinley but during the campaign sued the *Pittsburgh Commercial Gazette* and *Pittsburgh Press* on a charge of criminal libel because they had alleged that he and Mr. Flinn had made a deal with Mark Hanna to boom McKinley in consideration of the sum of \$150,000.⁹ In the convention

⁷ See Henry C. Wright, *Bossism in Cincinnati* (Cincinnati, 1905), pp. 166-167.

⁸ Lincoln Steffens, *The Shame of the Cities* (New York, 1904), p. 158.

⁹ See the *New York Tribune*, March 12, 1896, 2:1, and the *New York Evening Post*, March 19, 1901, 22:2.

of 1900 the "Senator" heroically shouldered severe illness and took his seat for the first session. Along toward the end of his career Mr. Magee made a determined effort to obtain a seat in the United States Senate. John Wanamaker and certain other Philadelphians gave him some encouragement in the endeavor, the Allegheny organization of course enthusiastically backed his candidacy, but Matthew Stanley Quay opposed vigorously and narrowly prevented the realization of the ambition largely through the agency of a speaker of the Pennsylvania house of representatives whom he controlled.¹⁰

Beginning with 1872, Mr. Magee attended every state convention of the Republican party with the exception of the ones held in 1877 and 1890. He began to be influential in state politics around the year 1880, enjoyed the friendship of J. D. Cameron, the state boss, and twice held the post of secretary to the state committee of the party, being secretary at his death. On the whole the power and opposition of Mr. Quay, who succeeded the Camerons, largely limited his field to the local areas of Allegheny County and Pittsburgh. However, he twice received election to the state senate. In 1896 having received both the Republican and Democratic nominations, he polled 12,000 votes to his opponent's 4,000, and in 1900, as dual nominee again, his election was almost unanimous.¹¹ The senate journal indicates that he took a prominent part in the proceedings of that body, introducing important measures, serving on leading committees, and altogether exerting marked influence on the business of the state.¹² One of the especially beneficent pieces of legislation

¹⁰ *Pittsburg Post*, March 9, 1901, p. 2.

¹¹ See *Pittsburgh Press*, March 9, 1901, p. 1.

¹² *Journal of the Senate of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 1899* (Harrisburg, 1899), pp. 1488, 1499. Mr. Magee served on the following committees: banks and building and loan associations, corporations, finance, insurance, municipal affairs, and railroads and street passenger railways.

which he sponsored provided a system of free public libraries for cities of the second and third class and for towns and boroughs of the state.¹³ The act set up a commission, of which Mr. Magee was appointed chairman, to oversee the establishment of such libraries. The year 1899 witnessed a serious deadlock in the Pennsylvania legislature over the election of a United States senator. After seventy-nine ballots had been taken, in seventy-one of which Senator Magee voted for his old opponent, M. S. Quay, he made the motion which adjourned the joint assembly *sine die*.¹⁴

Although not primarily interested in holding public office, with the exception of an ambition for a seat in the United States Senate, Mr. Magee held several political positions of an advisory nature after severing relations with the treasurer's office. From 1878 to 1888, for example, he sat on the board of fire commissioners of Pittsburgh and for several years prior to his death rendered the city valuable service as member and treasurer of the sinking-fund commission.

"Senator" Magee contrasted with many well-known municipal leaders by being somewhat slender in build rather than a heavy-weight. But in spite of slenderness he boasted a "magnificent build."¹⁵ He possessed a "plump neck," had black hair, wore a short mustache, and walked with "a quick, light step."¹⁶ Although his "round, full face" beamed with geniality, "bright, piercing eyes" bore evidence of determination and capacity.¹⁷ In habits "exceptionally regular" and a "total abstainer," Mr. Magee, nevertheless, made a dashing figure altogether and gathered around himself a circle of admirers and followers such as few political bosses have

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 1488.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 2208 ff.

¹⁵ *Pittsburgh Chronicle Telegraph*, March 9, 1901, p. 5.

¹⁶ *Pittsburg Post*, March 9, 1901, p. 1.

¹⁷ *Pittsburgh Chronicle Telegraph*, March 9, 1901, p. 5.

commanded.¹⁸ A political opponent characterizes him as "a man of charming personality, large heart," who was "genuinely interested in the welfare of his fellow men."¹⁹ Gifted with self-poise and a never-failing sense of tact, he handled difficult situations easily. Then, too, he talked well and, although not an orator, could "charm an audience,"²⁰ He spoke frequently on political subjects, wrote well, employing a "terse, explicit, clear style," but he seldom read books.²¹ Ordinarily men endowed with such social graces tend to lack in executive ability, but "Senator" Magee shrewdly drew up an exceedingly ambitious plan for securing power and succeeded admirably in carrying it out.

Because of a goodly supply of diplomacy and tact, "magnanimity to a fallen foe," and the inclination to grant almost any favor Mr. Magee cannot be designated a "hard boss."²² A "liberal, broad-minded man," he handled men without the harshness frequently said to be essential.²³ On occasion he could punish, although he preferred to leave that to Mr. Flinn. He fought, on the whole, more effectively than many who fight spectacularly, largely because he possessed a good mind and a keen sense of future value.

As a business man Mr. Magee occupied a very prominent place in Pittsburgh. His business partner, Joshua Rhodes, chairman of the National Tube Company, characterized him as a "shrewd and far-seeing business man."²⁴ He laid the foundations of a fortune before 1880, reached a period of very rapid expansion in 1884, almost went broke in 1891,

¹⁸ *New York Tribune*, August 4, 1899, 3:6. See also *Pittsburgh Dispatch*, March 9, 1901, p. 1.

¹⁹ The author is indebted to Judge Tensard De Wolf of the Pittsburgh Morals Court for this information.

²⁰ *Pittsburgh Commercial Gazette*, March 9, 1901, p. 1.

²¹ *Pittsburgh Press*, March 9, 1901, p. 11.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Pittsburgh Commercial Gazette*, March 9, 1901, p. 1.

²⁴ *Pittsburgh Chronicle Telegraph*, March 9, 1901, p. 5.

and finally emerged a very wealthy man. He served as president of the Consolidated Traction Company; owned the *Pittsburgh Times*, the Pratt building on Fifth Avenue, the Times building on Fourth Avenue, numerous houses in the East End, and much real estate on Squirrel Hill; acted as director of the Freehold National Bank, the Pittsburgh Trust Company, the Western Insurance Company, the Allegheny Light Company, the Citizens' Traction Company, the Duquesne Traction Company, the Pittsburgh Traction Company, the Central Traction Company, the Allegheny Traction Company, the Fort Pitt Traction Company, the Monongahela Traction Company, the Pittsburgh, Allegheny, and Manchester Traction Company, the Farmers' Deposit National Bank, the First National Bank of Carnegie, and the Carnegie Trust Company; and held stock in more than fifty enterprises, including: natural gas promotions, Mesaba iron mines, the Consolidated Gas Company, Southern Heat and Light Company, Sharon Steel Company, American Window Glass Company, Oliver Iron and Steel Company, Sharon Tinplate Company, Sharon Improvement Company, Fidelity Title and Trust Company, Metropolitan Traction Company of New York, and Philadelphia Traction Lines.²⁵ The traction interests displayed his business ability to good advantage. First he made himself president of the Transverse Railway Company, then gradually gained control over a number of street railway lines in Pittsburgh and the surrounding country, secured franchises which read for terms of approximately a thousand years, and eventually united all the lines into the Consolidated Traction Company. This he capitalized at thirty million dollars and developed into one of the large corporations of Pennsylvania. The inventory filed in pro-

²⁵ See *Directory of Pittsburgh and Allegheny Cities, 1883* (Pittsburgh, 1883), p. 502; *Pittsburgh Chronicle Telegraph*, March 9, 1901, p. 5; *Pittsburgh Dispatch*, March 9, 1901, p. 1; and *New York Evening Post*, March 19, 1901, 22:2.

bating his estate showed that his personal property amounted to \$2,585,262.09. His real estate bore the appraised value for collateral tax purposes of \$1,865,540.²⁶

Politics and business did not command all the time and energy of "Senator" Magee. He also found time for civic and club activities, being a member of the Duquesne Club, the Young Men's Republican Tariff Club, and the Chamber of Commerce of Pittsburgh and of the Union League of Philadelphia. He served as a life trustee of the Carnegie Fine Arts and Museum Fund, president of the board of trustees of Mercy Hospital, guarantor of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, trustee of Western University, trustee of Holy Ghost College, and president of the Pittsburgh Press Club. As a Christmas remembrance to the children of Pittsburgh in 1895 he gave the sum of one hundred thousand dollars to be used in establishing a zoölogical garden at Highland Park. Mr. Magee gave \$10,000 toward a newsboys' home and \$15,000 for a pathological laboratory at Mercy Hospital. The Elizabeth Steele Magee Hospital, characterized as "one of the foremost maternity hospitals in America," stands as a monument to his mother and represents the bulk of his large estate.²⁷ In all he gave most generously to Pittsburgh charitable enterprises and to those in need. Mr. Magee belonged to the First Methodist Protestant Church of Pittsburgh, and displayed some interest in St. John's Catholic Church, but altogether religion took a subordinate place in his interests. The "Senator" also held membership in fraternal orders, being a thirty-second degree Mason, a Knight Templar, and worshipful master of No. 535 F. & A. M.

On June 6, 1878, Mr. Magee married Eleanor Louise Gillespie, daughter of J. J. Gillespie, a Pittsburgh art dealer,

²⁶ Information furnished by courtesy of J. N. Mackrell, Register of Wills of Allegheny County.

²⁷ An evaluation of Judge Tensard De Wolf of Pittsburgh.

and sometime later built a magnificent home, known as the "Maples." Mrs. Magee interested herself in art and music, held the presidency of the Tuesday Musical Club, and after her husband's death soon went to Rome and resided for several years in an Italian villa.²⁸ The Magees had no children. The social prominence of the family warranted a place in the *Social Register*.²⁹ The "Maples" stood as one of the society centers of its time, entertaining such visitors as Mrs. U. S. Grant.

Nepotism played an unusually important part in the career of Mr. Magee, for he depended upon his more than sixty Pittsburgh relatives to a large degree. An uncle, Squire Thomas Steele, opened his political career, while a cousin, Thomas Steele Bigelow, angered at the dismissal of a brother from the office of director of public works, waged a long war against the Magee-Flinn organization and finally became boss of the city himself. Another cousin, E. M. Bigelow, served as director of public works until he quarreled with Flinn. A nephew, William A. Magee, who lived with Mr. Magee, sat as member of the common council in 1883 and in 1909 became mayor of Pittsburgh. His last term expired as recently as 1925. A brother, Fred, proved of worth in securing franchises for street railway interests. C. L. Magee, Jr., worked in the bureau of electricity, and J. M. Anderson, another cousin, directed the department of charities.

Ordinarily Mr. Magee enjoyed complete success in Allegheny and Pittsburgh politics. The county remained almost absolutely loyal all through the years, and the city remained obedient most of the time. In 1893 he encountered a bad defeat in the city but reorganized the machine and soon recovered. The single thorn which really pricked took the

²⁸ See *Pittsburg Leader*, March 9, 1901, p. 5.

²⁹ *Social Register*, XVIII, No. 8, 35.

form of Matthew Stanley Quay whose interests conflicted with those of Magee not only in rivalry for a place in the United States Senate but in general state politics. Both had been followers of Cameron and worked together until 1883 when each desired to name the state treasurer because of the strategic importance of the office in state politics. Mr. Magee succeeded in swinging the convention much to the chagrin of Mr. Quay. During the interval between 1883 and 1885 Quay left no stone unturned in his efforts to best Magee and in 1885, announcing himself a candidate for the office of treasurer, won out and soon thereafter stepped into the United States Senate. From 1883 the two remained constant enemies. In 1889 the struggle flared over the office of governor and the disposal of federal patronage. Mr. Magee secretly aided R. E. Pattison, the Democratic candidate, who won the election. Another fierce battle in 1895, when David Martin of Philadelphia aided Mr. Magee against Quay, failed to vanquish the state boss and so the struggle continued. Realizing that Mr. Magee's chief fountain of power lay in Allegheny County, Mr. Quay did not content himself with opposition in the state arena alone but entered local politics as well. He attempted to stir up strife, aided mal-contents, and even supported reform organizations if there seemed to be no better way of hitting his foe. In 1895 Quay, for example, aided the Municipal League of Pittsburgh with its mayoralty candidate, George W. Guthrie, who had brought a suit for some six million dollars in connection with contracts advocated by Mr. Magee. This particular election went against the reformers by a slight margin of approximately a thousand votes, but in 1897 the bosses lost a number of councilmen. The Municipal League elected eight of its own nominees and ten of the councilmanic candidates whom it had endorsed. After this victory the League decided to concentrate attention on a new charter and secured

the aid of Mr. Quay in the state legislature. However, the legislature, after amending the proposed charter almost beyond recognition, buried it deep in its files.

In 1899 "Senator" Magee suffered from a nervous and physical disorder, partially induced by his trying contest with Mr. Quay.³⁰ While absent from the city for treatment and rest his associate, William Flinn, got into difficulty with the director of public works over street specifications. Hitherto the directors of that department had drawn the specifications in such a manner that only Booth and Flinn, Ltd. could compete. E. M. Bigelow, the director, moved by public dissatisfaction, liberalized them so that other firms might have a chance. After Mr. Bigelow refused to withdraw his innovation, Flinn caused, according to common report, the councils to eject him from office and thereby generated much bad feeling on the part of the ex-director and his brother, Thomas Steele Bigelow, an influential citizen of Pittsburgh with large financial backing.³¹

Both the Bigelows were relatives of Magee. However, Tom Bigelow had a long standing grudge against Mr. Magee on account of certain traction deals and hence did not hesitate to strike at him as well as at Flinn. Tom threw his influence for Mr. Quay, aided him in his fight for reelection to the Senate, and then introduced a bill in the state legislature aimed at the destruction of the Magee-Flinn machine. In spite of all that "Senator" Magee could do, the charter passed the legislature and became a law. The new city charter provided a city recorder or mayor to be elected in 1903 and allowed the governor of the commonwealth to

³⁰ A *New York Tribune* reporter in 1899 noticed that Mr. Magee's face was "leaden with illness." See the *New York Tribune*, August 4, 1899, 3:6.

³¹ G. W. Guthrie, "The Pittsburgh Victory," *Proceedings of the Eighth Annual Meeting of the National Municipal League*, 1902 (Philadelphia, 1902), pp. 148-151.

make the appointment in the meantime. Fortunately for the organization at Pittsburgh Mr. Magee controlled the appointment of the governor and thereby staved off the evil hour.

During the months subsequent to 1899 Mr. Magee suffered severely from illness and on March 8, 1901, finally died. After his death the machine which he had so carefully constructed went to pieces. The first appointee of the governor eventually went over to the reform side and had to be removed. This caused publicity and incidentally criticism which damaged the machine. It partially accounts for the defeat in the February election of 1902. In this election the Citizens' party elected the controller, a goodly majority of the common councilmen, fourteen out of nineteen select councilmen, and piled up a plurality of some eight thousand votes. Again in the county election the reformers won. When they also elected the recorder in 1903, the Magee-Flinn machine saw its last hold gone.³²

As an epitaph to the life and career of Mr. Magee some comments of Andrew Carnegie and William Flinn are appended. Mr. Carnegie said: "Pittsburgh has lost one of her ablest and most devoted sons in the death of Mr. Magee. . . . There was none to whom I turned with greater confidence of receiving loyal support and wise counsel in all work which had in view the highest good of our city. . . . The most bitter opponent will say in his heart: 'There lies a public-spirited, able man, a Pittsburgher of Pittsburghers; whom Pittsburgh will long mourn and honor.' We shall wait long for one better known or better liked than 'Chris' Magee."³³ Mr. Flinn said: "Mr. Magee and I were life-

³² For additional information on the breakup of the Magee-Flinn machine, see G. W. Guthrie, "The Pittsburgh Victory," *Proceedings of the Eighth Annual Meeting of the National Municipal League, 1902*, pp. 148-159.

³³ *Pittsburgh Chronicle Telegraph*, March 9, 1901, p. 5.

long friends, closely associated in business and political matters. He was the most generous man I ever knew, generous alike to his friends and to the stranger. . . . During the past twenty years he has controlled the politics of Pittsburgh and the County of Allegheny. He used his power well and largely for the public good."³⁴

³⁴ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER XIII

"SENATOR" WILLIAM FLINN

Political bosses have rarely been prominent in the social life of their cities. Neither have they ordinarily stood in the first or genius group of business men. However, the name of William Flinn is to be found listed in the *Pittsburgh Social Register* for a period of twenty years. Then, too, his large fortune and numerous important business connections indicate his large ability along business lines.¹

"Senator" Flinn was born in Manchester, England, on May twenty-sixth in the year 1851. Both of his parents were natives of Ireland and left the isle to escape political persecution. After a period of financial difficulty in England they emigrated to the United States and arrived in Pittsburgh in the year 1851, when their son was scarcely more than six months old. The father, John Flinn, did fairly well with a small contracting business and before his death in the early teens of William became casually known in political circles of his ward. Until 1896, when William Flinn moved with his family to the Nineteenth Ward, the Flinns lived in the old Sixth Ward, famed for its practical politics.²

Young William left school at the age of nine years and hence did not pass beyond the common school grades.³ Nevertheless, he cannot be classed as uneducated, for a keen

¹ See the *Social Register*, XXXIII, No. 8, 35-36.

² For additional information concerning the Flinn family, see Smull, *Legislative Hand Book and Manual of the State of Pennsylvania*, 1900 (Harrisburg, 1900), p. 1159; *Pittsburgh Gazette-Times*, February 20, 1924, pp. 1, 4; *Pittsburgh Post*, February 20, 1924, pp. 1, 3; *Pittsburgh Sun*, February 19, 1924, p. 4; *Pittsburgh Press*, February 19, 1924, p. 1; *Pittsburgh Chronicle Telegraph*, February 19, 1924, p. 1; *Encyclopaedia of Pennsylvania Biography* (New York, 1914), III, 840, and *A Century and a Half of Pittsburgh and Her People*, ed. John W. Jordan (—, 1908), IV, 123.

³ See Mr. Flinn's statement in Smull, *Legislative Hand Book and Manual of the State of Pennsylvania*, 1900, p. 1159.



WILLIAM FLINN

interest in the world and its affairs gave him possession of considerable knowledge. After leaving school, he sold papers and blacked boots for a time and then set to work in a brick yard. Later he became an apprentice in the brass finishing and gas and steam fitting trades. When these had been mastered, Mr. Flinn set up as a contractor and in 1877 formed a partnership with James J. Booth, thus establishing the firm of Booth and Flinn, Ltd. Business rolled in, the company expanded rapidly, and today it stands as one of the large contracting firms of the United States. The main field of Booth and Flinn has been in the vicinage of Pittsburgh, where it has handled most of the paving, erecting of public buildings, and other public contracting, such as the construction of the Liberty tubes. It has also held large outside contracts, such as for the Hudson vehicle tube and subway construction in New York City.⁴

Encouraged no doubt by the atmosphere of the old Sixth Ward, William Flinn entered politics as a very young man. Starting out in his ward as a gatherer of stray votes, he soon became ward boss and in 1877 climbed to a commissionership on the Pittsburgh fire board. This commissionership chanced to be his only out-and-out office in the municipality, although in 1912, after he had become a reformer, he held a non-political appointment on the city planning commission.⁵ "Senator" Flinn rose quite rapidly in politics during the seventies, largely because of an alliance with a dashing young Pittsburgher, Christopher L. Magee. Mr. Magee was a fine mixer and easily won the support of voters. Mr. Flinn fell behind in personal attractiveness but

⁴ *Ibid.*, *New York Times*, July 23, 1916, sec. 1, 9:2, and the *Legislative Journal of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, 1913 (Harrisburg, 1913), III, 2766. Judge Tensard De Wolf of the Pittsburgh Morals Court writes that the Flinn "firm for years (did) the greatest part of the public work in this city."

⁵ *Councilmanic Hand Book of Pittsburg, 1912-1913* (Oil City, Pa., 1912), p. 30.

possessed first-rate business ability and handled the matter of organization very satisfactorily. The pair, thus complementing each other, divided up the work incident to bringing Pittsburgh and Allegheny County under control. In 1882 Mr. Flinn became chairman of the city executive committee of the Republican organization, a place from which he dominated for the next score of years.

In the interval between the first municipal office and accession to the barony of Pittsburgh "Senator" Flinn entered state politics. In 1879 and again in 1881 he represented a part of Pittsburgh in the lower house of the state legislature. In 1890 he went up to the state senate from the Forty-Fourth District, returning in 1894 and again in 1898. Both Mr. Flinn and Mr. Magee sat in the senate during the years 1896-1900, and although they sometimes did not agree on matters that came before that body, they accomplished much all told.⁶ Flinn got along somewhat better with the state bosses than his colleague Magee and hence handled most of the business that depended on the legislature. Through skill as a public speaker and in handling important committee assignments Mr. Flinn exerted great influence on legislation in general as well as special Pittsburgh bills. The *Journal* of the 1899 session mentions him as a member of the committees on agriculture, congressional apportionment, legislative apportionment, municipal affairs, public roads and highways, railroads, and street passenger railways and as chairman of the committee on education.⁷ "Senator" Flinn sponsored certain measures, notably a good roads law, which established a system of state highways, and the "Greater Pittsburgh bill," which consolidated Pittsburgh and Allegheny.⁸

⁶ For differences, see the *Senate Journal*, 1899 (Harrisburg, 1899), pp. 365, 2079.

⁷ See pp. 420-422.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 1538.

Along in 1874 Mr. Flinn married Nancy Galbraith and established a home for himself. Their children, numbering six, four boys and two girls, have occupied prominent places in financial and social circles of Pittsburgh for many years. Three sons, George, Ralph, and A. Rex, were graduated from Yale, and all four sons belong to university clubs.⁹ Rex Flinn held a commission as captain in the American army during the late war, holds large lumber interests, serves as a director of institutions, such as the Legal Aid Society and Newsboys' Home, and is an officer or director on seven boards.¹⁰ George Flinn associated himself with his father in Booth and Flinn, Ltd. as secretary-treasurer, owns large oil holdings, aids in the direction of the Western National Bank of Pittsburgh, and is an officer or director in six business firms.¹¹ Ralph Flinn concerns himself with oil and mining and has been an officer or director of three business institutions.¹² The entire family has stood well to the fore in the club life of Pittsburgh. "Senator" Flinn identified himself with three clubs, William Arthur with two, Ralph with four, George with seven, and Rex with five.¹³ The family home, known as "Braemar," located in East Pittsburgh, was long a show place and has been the scene of many social events.¹⁴

Above the average in bodily size "Senator" Flinn measured six feet in height and weighed approximately two hundred pounds. William A. Magee, recent mayor of Pittsburgh, mentions his "alert mind, strong character, and masterful personality" and says further, "I can think of no one who was a more decisive factor in the determination of

⁹ *Social Register*, vol. XXIII, No. 8, 35-36.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 35, and the *Directory of Directors of the Pittsburgh District*, 1917 (Boston, 1917), p. 127.

¹¹ *Directory of Directors of the Pittsburgh District*, 1917, p. 128.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Social Register*, XXIII, No. 8, 35-36.

¹⁴ See the *Pittsburgh Post*, February 20, 1924, p. 3.

public affairs in this city in our time than he."¹⁵ Although inclined to be silent, Mr. Flinn was not without geniality and possessed a fair sense of humor. Yet he was well able to take care of himself by keeping men at a proper distance and indicated that he "loved obstacles" by frequently engaging in grilling battles with those who stood in his way.¹⁶ In the combination with Chris Magee he handled among other matters the problem of discipline and did it extremely well. His success in business was unusual not only because of profitable public contracts but because he possessed a large amount of ingenuity, found it possible to make "quick decisions," and proved himself an excellent judge of men.¹⁷ Furthermore he commanded a grasp of details that proved extremely useful in both business and politics and displayed "wonderful adaptability to new aspects of things."¹⁸ By way of exception among political bosses "Senator" Flinn spoke ably in public. His speech had the quality of clarity and terseness and easily held the attention of an audience.

Charitable enterprises not only drew generous contributions from Mr. Flinn but induced him to serve as director or officer. Thus he held the place of vice-president and trustee of the Elizabeth Steele Magee Hospital, member of the advisory board of the Industrial Board for Crippled Children, director of the Pittsburgh Maternity Dispensary, and director and member of the executive committee of the Western Pennsylvania Hospital. The Western Pennsylvania Hospital stands as a monument to Mr. Flinn, for he took charge

¹⁵ See the *Pittsburgh Post*, February 20, 1924, p. 3.

¹⁶ See Paul U. Kellogg, *The Pittsburgh District* (New York, 1914), V, 47, and George W. Guthrie, "The Pittsburgh Victory," *Proceedings of the Boston Conference for Good City Government*, 1902 (Philadelphia, 1902), p. 148.

¹⁷ *Pittsburgh Post*, February 20, 1924, p. 3, and Henry C. Wright, *Bossism in Cincinnati* (Cincinnati, 1905), p. 166.

¹⁸ Statement of sometime Mayor W. A. Magee in *Pittsburgh Post*, February 20, 1924, p. 3.

of its construction and raised more than a million dollars for its use. Although of Irish stock, the "Senator" maintained affiliation with the Sixth United Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh and took an active part in religious work.¹⁹ As a state senator he distinguished himself by presenting numerous petitions drafted by ministerial associations and young people's Christian organizations.²⁰ His hobby took the form of "Beechwood," a model farm of 127 acres in Allegheny County, where he bred fancy Guernsey cattle.²¹

The *Directory of Directors of the Pittsburgh District* reveals how extensively ranged the business interests of this particular boss as well as his willingness to allow his name to be used in connection with such enterprises. Of the sixteen institutions listed under his name in 1917 he served as president and director of five, chairman of the board of managers of one, vice-president and trustee of one, and director of nine.²² Among business interests mining, lumber, and fuel concerns were especially prominent. Among the concerns in which Mr. Flinn held directorships or offices in 1917 may be mentioned the Duquesne Lumber Company, Freehold Oil and Gas Company, Pittsburgh Lumber Company, Pittsburgh Silver Peak Gold Mining Company, Sharon Water Works Company, Arkansas Natural Gas Company, Gulf Oil Corporation, Manufacturers' Light and Heat Company, Pittsburgh Coal Company, and Pittsburgh Coal Company of New Jersey.²³ No other political leader considered in this work approached "Senator" Flinn as a financial genius. At his death he left personal property

¹⁹ Information available through the courtesy of Judge Tensard De Wolf of Pittsburgh.

²⁰ See, for example, *Journal of the Senate of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 1899*, p. 1098.

²¹ See *Pittsburgh Gazette-Times*, February 20, 1924, p. 4.

²² See p. 128.

²³ *Directory of Directors of the Pittsburgh District, 1917*, p. 128.

valued at \$10,907,358.79 and real estate appraised at \$435,-321.52.²⁴

From 1884 to 1912 Mr. Flinn held some prominence in Republican national conventions, during those years attending practically every convention as a delegate. However, in 1912 he withdrew from the Grand Old Party and joined the Progressives. Serving as national committeeman of the Progressive party from Pennsylvania, he took a very active part in the campaign of 1912. In 1916 he favored Mr. Hughes for president and suggested that it would be wise for Progressives to return to the Republican party. But he also said, "The rule of the seas applies to me. I must be the last man—or one of the last—to leave the Progressive ship—that is provided all the others intend to leave it."²⁵

In Pennsylvania Mr. Flinn held a difficult seat as far as state politics was concerned. He attended state conventions assiduously and, as has already been noted, served in both houses of the state legislature at various times. However, conflict of the interests of Senator Quay with those of the Pittsburgh machine as well as personal difficulties with Boies Penrose prevented great dominance in the state as a whole. "Senator" Flinn finally negotiated an agreement with Mr. Quay, with whom he got along much better than did his colleague, which, although never effective because subsequent events prevented Mr. Magee from signing it, nevertheless, indicates the situation between the conflicting interests. In the agreement Flinn and Magee pledged themselves to allow Mr. Quay a free rein in state and national politics, subject to certain definite exceptions, in return for a like concession in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County.²⁶

²⁴ These valuations are available through the courtesy of J. N. Mackrell, Register of Wills of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County.

²⁵ For Flinn's Progressive activities, see the *New York Times*, December 20, 1915, 4:6; June 26, 1916, 1:2; and June 30, 1916, 9:3.

²⁶ For the text of the agreement, see the *Legislative Journal of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, 1913, III, 3766.

It was, then, in the sphere of Pittsburgh and Allegheny politics that "Senator" Flinn mainly dominated, although his office record little indicates it, except perhaps for the semi-official twenty year term as chairman of the Republican city executive committee. The machine perfected to control the city and county grew out of careful planning and altogether probably accomplished its purpose as well as any machine built up in any city of the United States. It reached down into the political depths of every ward and precinct and drew in business and industry as well by the favors it had at its disposal. The two leaders acted as agents for such important companies as the Pennsylvania Railroad and incidentally controlled the vast patronage involved.²⁷ To more conveniently control the city the bosses drew up the Bruce charter, which centered executive power in the mayor and three department heads, and caused its passage through the legislature.

Technically little dishonesty could be found in the working of the Flinn-Magee political machine. Vice appeared to operate rather openly throughout the city, but it does not seem likely that the two bosses profited personally therefrom.²⁸ Public officials did not ordinarily make contracts irrespective of the law; yet they failed to live up to the spirit of the law. The law, for example, provided that contracts should be awarded to the "lowest responsible bidder," and although Booth and Flinn asked considerably more for paving than other bidders, they received all of the \$3,551,131 worth of paving laid in Pittsburgh for nine years, except for a small job of \$33,400, on the ground that they were the "lowest responsible bidder."²⁹ In the construction of public

²⁷ See Henry C. Wright, *Bossism in Cincinnati*, p. 167, and Lincoln Steffens, *The Shame of the Cities* (New York, 1904), pp. 157-158.

²⁸ For a contrary statement, see Lincoln Steffens, *The Shame of the Cities*, p. 165.

²⁹ George W. Guthrie, "The Pittsburgh Victory," *Proceedings of the Boston Conference for Good City Government*, 1902, p. 151.

buildings the bosses had the specifications so minutely set down that no one, except Booth and Flinn, could hope to build such structures for lack of proper materials.³⁰ Nevertheless, Mr. Flinn contended that a "political machine could be 'decent' and if it was not decent, it ought not to exist."³¹

The downfall of the organization began in 1899 over a contest, centering on the question of paving contracts, in which Flinn and E. M. Bigelow, director of public works of Pittsburgh, were principals. Hitherto specifications had been of such a character that Booth and Flinn received almost no competition, and hence prices ranged from one dollar to one dollar and eighty cents per square yard above prevailing prices in the vicinity.³² Popular dissatisfaction with such a system induced Director Bigelow to broaden the specifications. "Senator" Flinn became incensed at the action and demanded that it be retracted. When Mr. Bigelow refused, he caused the council to eject him from office, although it was questionable whether the council possessed such authority. Due to illness Mr. Magee happened to be absent from Pittsburgh at the time, and, therefore, the situation lacked a tactful hand to smooth matters out.

Such a dismissal of the director of public works caused much bitterness, and a wealthy brother, Thomas Steele Bigelow, determined to avenge the family. He undertook to manage Mr. Quay's fight for reelection to the United States Senate and, having won it, introduced and passed a bill through the legislature which provided a new charter for Pittsburgh. The charter vested in the governor of the commonwealth the appointment of a mayor or recorder until an election should be held in 1903. Obviously this threatened

³⁰ *Legislative Journal of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 1913, III, 3766.*

³¹ *Pittsburg Gazette-Times, February 20, 1924, p. 4.*

³² *Legislative Journal of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 1913, III, 3766.*

the Magee-Flinn machine, but for the time being all depended on which side could control the governor in his appointment. The Flinn faction gained the upper hand and secured the naming of Major A. M. Brown as recorder. However, with Magee ill and Flinn, therefore, compelled to manage everything, the machine escaped bounds, and Major Brown considered the time ripe to join the reformers. But again the Flinn forces averted catastrophe and caused Brown's dismissal.

A second appointment by the governor suited the "Senator" very well; yet the removal and new appointment stirred up much publicity and eventually brought about a hostile public sentiment. In the 1902 election the opposition carried the city by a plurality of some eight thousand votes and soon thereafter won over Allegheny County.³³ After an illness of many months Mr. Magee died in 1901 and left Flinn with a difficult situation and a weakened organization on his hands. Facing the matter squarely, the "Senator" decided to withdraw from machine politics entirely.

Although Mr. Flinn abstained from machine politics after the death of his colleague, he by no means lost all interest in politics. Indeed in the years following 1902 he shifted from his old place and allied himself with the progressive forces. He advocated smoke abatement laws, drew up bills looking to the direct primary system, favored the initiative, referendum, and recall, woman suffrage, and the direct election of senators, and wrote a civil service law for Pittsburgh on the statute book. It has already been mentioned that in the bolt of 1912 he came to the fore and served as Progressive national committeeman. In the same year he accepted the chairmanship of the Pittsburgh planning

³³ For accounts of the Bigelow-Flinn feud, see George W. Guthrie, "The Pittsburgh Victory," *Proceedings of the Boston Conference for Good City Government, 1902*, pp. 151-159, and Henry C. Wright, *Bossism in Cincinnati*, p. 168.

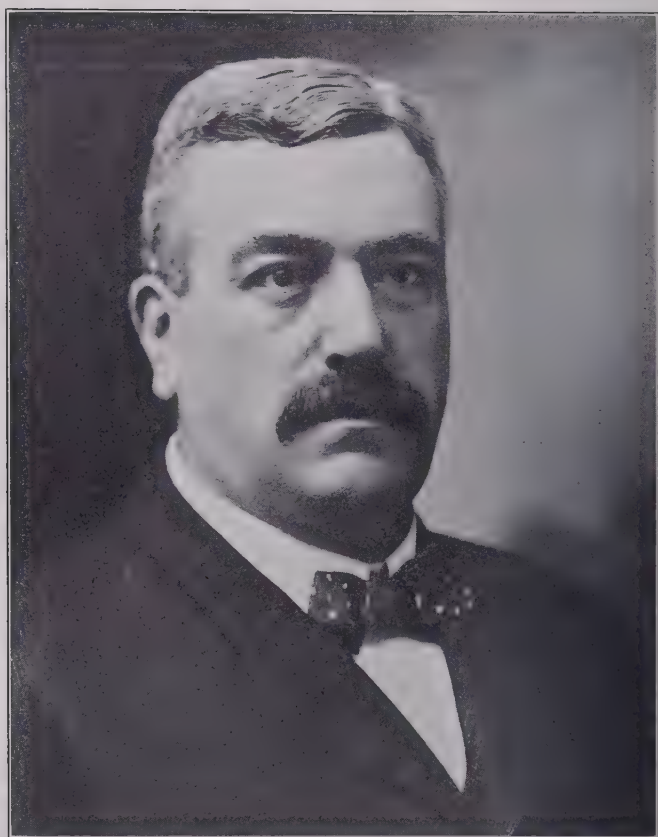
commission and devoted much time to a water filtration plant, even studying European systems. During the years between 1902 and his death in 1924 Mr. Flinn maintained his independent position and "took a rather active part in so-called independent politics."³⁴ Among other things he emphasized the purity of the ballot box and paid the expenses of several investigations out of his own pocket.³⁵ During the war he threw himself enthusiastically into the movement for war gardens and as late as 1923 drew up more than a dozen bills embodying certain electoral reforms for submission to the legislature. "Senator" Flinn founded the Roosevelt Commemoration Association for the purpose of honoring the man he admired so greatly. After his death on February 19, 1924, the Association placed in the rotunda of the City-County Building of Pittsburgh a tablet bearing the following legend:

1851 William Flinn 1924
 A Builder
 For and Among Men³⁶

³⁴ From a letter written by Judge Tensard De Wolf.

³⁵ See *Pittsburgh Gazette-Times*, February 20, 1924, p. 4.

³⁶ Governor Pinchot presented the tablet and Mayor W. A. Magee, nephew of Chris Magee, accepted it for Pittsburgh. The author is grateful to Honorable J. N. Mackrell for a photograph of the tablet.



GEORGE B. COX

CHAPTER XIV

"OLD BOY" GEORGE B. COX

In 1925 Cincinnati made a revolt against its boss and adopted the city manager form of government. While on this particular occasion the late Rud Hynicka happened to be the martyr, such revolts always call to mind the founder of the Cincinnati dynasty, George Barnesdale Cox, who dominated the city and Hamilton County for more than twenty-five years and successfully weathered three or four similar political storms.

Mr. Cox was born on Carlisle Avenue in Cincinnati, April 29, 1853. His father had emigrated from England in 1847, spent the remaining years of his life in Cincinnati as a none too prosperous laborer, and finally died in 1861, leaving a family which included a wife, two girls, and one boy in addition to George. Mr. Cox said of his father, "He was a very pious man, but he died when I was only eight years old without leaving a dollar. I had to leave school and help support my mother."¹ Mrs. Cox died in Cincinnati in 1912.

Young George spent some time prior to his ninth year in elementary school and then went to work selling newspapers to help out at home "because it was," as he said, "the only work I was fitted for."² From newsboy he advanced to errand boy, boot-black, and finally at the age of twenty to butcher boy for Ross Fenton at a weekly wage of five dollars. After driving a vegetable wagon from door to door for a time, he operated a delivery wagon for Pogue's Dry Goods Emporium, and then accepted a job as a tobacco peddler. A brother-in-law, Tom Mead, later employed George Cox as a

¹ *Cincinnati Post*, May 20, 1916, p. 1. See also *New York Times*, May 21, 1916, sec. 7, 3:1. The author is indebted to the municipal reference bureau of the University of Cincinnati for information relative to the parentage of Mr. Cox.

² *Cincinnati Post*, May 20, 1916, p. 1.

manipulator of the number box in his gambling and keno joint. He continued at this job until in 1874 he acquired a share of ownership in a saloon commonly known as "Dead Man's Corner" because of its murder record. Mr. Cox later declared that during his youth he "was as fond of a scrap as any one, and I dare say that I fought a good many times, and if my memory serves me right, I was the victor on most occasions."³ Because of his reputation as a fighter he attracted a large following among the boys, formed a gang, and organized the "Osceola" base-ball team whose motto was "Win, Tie, or Fight."⁴ As a young man of twenty years Frank Kelly, a friend of that period, portrays Cox as "a great, tall, handsome fellow. He was afraid of no man, but never picked a quarrel."⁵

As early as his eighteenth year Mr. Cox took some part in Republican politics of the Eighteenth Ward of Cincinnati. For a time he acted as challenger at the polls in spite of the courage which that required, considering the time and the fact that the Republicans were in the minority. In reply to a "booting" which he received from the Democrats on one election day he is reported to have said, "My day will come and when it does some of you fellows had better take to the tall timber."⁶ After the saloon had been acquired, he branched out into greater political activity because of police interference. To obviate the trouble with the police Mr. Cox decided to make a campaign for a seat in the city council, and having won election in 1879, the police interference ceased. "Dead Man's Corner" became headquarters of a gang which exerted some influence in ward politics. Cox became its dominating figure by judicious distribution of

³ *Cincinnati Post*, May 20, 1916, p. 1.

⁴ *Cincinnati Times-Star*, May 20, 1916, p. 5.

⁵ *Cincinnati Post*, May 20, 1916, p. 1.

⁶ *Cincinnati Commercial Tribune*, May 21, 1916, p. 9. See also Henry C. Wright, *Bossism in Cincinnati* (Cincinnati, 1905), p. 8.

drinks, food, and sometimes of the rooms located over the saloon. Until 1878, when he entered the city council, the "Old Boy," as the people frequently called Mr. Cox, had made no remarkable place for himself in politics and at that time controlled about one-half of the Eighteenth Ward.

During the decade 1870-1880 Cincinnati enjoyed unusually satisfactory city government, largely because of a widespread interest generated by a Committee of Safety made up of leading citizens. This organization maintained offices for publicity, hired an attorney to keep an eye on various city officials, and brought a number of suits to restrain extravagant or dishonest city officers. Organized in 1873, the Committee flourished until the early part of the following decade. It succeeded in quelling corruption in the city until 1880 when a contest over the office of treasurer, according to common report, involved the expenditure of money for bribes.⁷

The city council, to which Mr. Cox received election by a margin of twenty-six votes in the face of a normal Democratic majority of five hundred, led the way to a seat on the decennial board of equalization whose function it was to reappraise all city property.⁸ The appraisals of certain valuable property are reported to have taken sudden drops during the term of the "Old Boy."⁹ Both as councilor and as equalizer Mr. Cox left a sizable mark although he took little part in the verbal proceedings. By 1882, the beginning of a second term in the council, he had completely won control of the "bloody" Eighteenth Ward.¹⁰ Just before 1882 he had asked the ward leader, R. H. Stevenson, to allow him the choice of five convention delegates. Stevenson's retort,

⁷ For additional information on the Committee of Safety and its work, see Henry C. Wright, *Bossism in Cincinnati*, pp. 8-12.

⁸ *Cincinnati Times-Star*, May 20, 1916, p. 5.

⁹ *New York Times*, May 21, 1916, sec. 7, 3:1.

¹⁰ *Cincinnati Times-Star*, November 5, 1884, p. 3.

"If they want to go to the convention, let them get up their own ticket and make a fight," angered Cox, and he elected all the delegates.¹¹ Hence he had at his command twelve delegates who, as a matter of fact, accomplished far more than their number would indicate because of absolute obedience to their master. In 1883 Mr. Cox attended the state convention as a delegate. In 1884 as chairman of the county campaign committee he received considerable publicity by managing a critical congressional election and the local Blaine campaign, offering to bet \$8,000 on Blaine, and checkmating the Democrats in an attempt to embarrass Mr. Blaine.¹² Mr. Blaine, speaking from the balcony of the Burnet House, found himself in competition with the police patrol which the Democrats sent clanging into the meeting. Cox is reported to have leaped to the street, seized the bridles of the police horses, and led them away. Although Mr. Blaine received a minority of the electoral votes, Cox piled up a large majority for him in Cincinnati and elected Republican congressmen.

This success in electing Republicans in a critical year brought the attention of Joseph B. Foraker who had been an unsuccessful candidate for governor of Ohio in 1883 and although successful in 1885 had not received Hamilton County support. Mr. Foraker desired a seat in the Senate of the United States and needed the Hamilton County vote. He seems to have been advised that Mr. Cox could best swing the county and hence in 1886 abolished the board of public works, the creature of the Committee of Safety, and established in its place a board of public affairs with a patronage of from twelve hundred to two thousand jobs. The "Old Boy" received the patronage of these jobs and soon thereafter largely expanded his control over Cincinnati.

¹¹ *Cincinnati Times-Star*, May 20, 1916, p. 5.

¹² *Cincinnati Times-Star*, November 5, 1884, p. 2.

Along with the coup of 1885-1886 Mr. Cox encountered a personal disappointment. He had had an eye on the office of county clerk for some time and in 1885 made up his mind to have it. In spite of the election of the Republican ticket by majorities ranging from eight to twelve thousand votes he lost out by some twenty-two hundred votes. His last public office, that of state oil gauger, came in 1887 through appointment by the governor of Ohio. Herbert Croly describes this office as "the most lucrative office within the gift of the governor of Ohio at that time."¹³ Governor Foraker apparently made the appointment as a reward for services rendered in the election of 1887 when for the first time he received Hamilton County backing. Mark Hanna and William McKinley had other plans for disposing of the office, and in as much as their wishes received little consideration and they were not notified of the decision until public announcement had been made, they renounced friendship with Mr. Foraker.¹⁴

An increase of political prestige throughout Ohio accompanied the office of oil gauger because of the intimate relationship which that office enjoyed with oil refiners. Nevertheless, Mr. Cox's power in Cincinnati and Hamilton County sank to a low level in the very same year that he accepted the office. A labor agitation created a Union Labor party which in spite of corrupt practices polled seventeen thousand votes to the Republican seventeen thousand nine hundred.¹⁵ As an offset the "Old Boy" and his friends set up the Loyal Republican League, dubbed by the *Cincinnati Times-Star* "The Stranglers," whose purpose it was to prepare a slate

¹³ See his book *Marcus Alonzo Hanna, His Life and Work* (New York, 1919), p. 129.

¹⁴ For additional information on this episode, see *ibid.*, pp. 128-129, and Joseph B. Foraker, *Notes of a Busy Life* (2 vols., 2nd ed., Cincinnati, 1916), I, 321.

¹⁵ Henry C. Wright, *Bossism in Cincinnati*, pp. 32, 33.

for conventions and hence in reality name public officials.¹⁶ This League eventually warded off much of the threatened danger and buoyed up Mr. Cox's waning power.

Again in 1889 Mr. Cox set his bag for the office of county clerk and this time fully expected election, for he had already tried his strength and found that it could usually place anyone he chose in office. Nevertheless, humiliation came on election day, this time touching an exceptionally tender spot, in as much as the successful candidate happened to be a former superintendent of schools who made no pretense of political skill. The "Old Boy" presented the curious anomaly of one who could name the incumbent of any office but lacked the power to occupy the office himself. As a consolation for his defeat he named the city auditor and uprooted the Kessler ring which had long been influential in the city. In the same year Mr. Cox received another blow in the election of James E. Campbell, a Democrat, as governor of Ohio. Mr. Campbell soon established a Democratic board of public improvements in Cincinnati to take the place of the Cox board of public affairs. Nevertheless, the "Old Boy" made the best of the situation through the aid of Democratic friends on the new board. Finally the governor favored the boss by abolishing the board because of its dishonesty. In its stead the legislature set up an elective board to be appointive until the next general election. To offset the loss of patronage resulting from this entanglement Mr. Cox managed to gain the confidence of the Cincinnati Gas Company and handled its interests as well as its rather large patronage.

Another difficulty, a split with a rival politician, Moerlein, over the patronage of the sheriff's office, ruffled the calm of 1890. Valentine Heim, a lieutenant of Moerlein and the successful aspirant to the office of sheriff, had received Mr.

¹⁶ *Cincinnati Times-Star*, March 11, 1889, pp. 1, 5.

Cox's support and in turn was expected to allow him the disposal of most of the spoils of the office. After election Heim refused to fulfill his promise, and a rupture with Cox on the one side and Moerlein on the other laid open the Republican ranks. But the "Old Boy" gained the upper hand, named the next ticket independently, and elected it with two or three exceptions. Moerlein soon died, leaving Cox without important rival in the Cincinnati Republican organization.¹⁷

Supporters of T. Horstman, corporation counsel and one of the two or three exceptions of 1891 referred to above, urged him to make the race for mayor in 1894. The "Old Boy" regarded the situation with anxious eyes, for Horstman had polled a plurality of some nine thousand votes while Cox's men had "skinned in" with margins counted in hundreds. Mr. Cox apparently bought off Horstman followers until the tide seemed safely ebbing, but no sooner had the excitement seemed calmed than Horstman announced that he would run as an independent because rumor charged him with a subterranean agreement with the boss. Ordinarily the Democrats would have relied on an independent candidate, realizing full well that they might bring about his election while their own case was hopeless. However, on this occasion the "Old Boy," who had many friends among Democratic leaders, persuaded them to put up a regular Democratic ticket. The result was that the eleven thousand votes polled by the Cox candidate brought about a Republican victory, although the combined votes of the Independents and Democrats considerably exceeded that number. To make impossible a recurrence of the 1894 danger Mr. Cox passed the Dana law in 1896 which made it unlawful for a candidate's name to appear on more than one ticket.

¹⁷ For additional information on this struggle with Moerlein and Heim, see Henry C. Wright, *Bossism in Cincinnati*, pp. 39-42.

In spite of the Dana law a menace in the form of a fusion ticket presented itself in 1897. Gustav Tafel led the ticket on a platform promising all kinds of improvements in the city government. John R. McLean, owner of the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, supported the Tafel aggregation and altogether should receive much of the credit for the election of nearly all the fusion candidates for city offices as well as fifteen members of the council.¹⁸ As defeat loomed, Mark Hanna and William McKinley advised the "Old Boy" to surrender the leadership. Having decided to follow their advice, he issued a statement on election morning to the effect that since "duty has been faithfully performed, I feel justified in publicly stating that I voluntarily, confidently looking for Republican success today, step down as leader, or a so-called 'boss'."¹⁹ The resignation actually did not take effect, for Mr. Cox regarded the first ticket selected by the committee of twelve, "the dozen raw," which took his place, as unsatisfactory, and when he presented a substitute, the convention adopted it.

The election of 1899 brought brighter days, and the regular Republican organization elected a full ticket. In 1900 Mr. Cox selected Julius Fleischmann, a member of the family of yeast magnates, as his leading candidate. Mr. Fleischmann received election and in 1903 a reëlection. The year 1903 achieved fame by establishing a Republican record in Cincinnati. The Cox ticket carried every ward in the city for the first time in history, won in two hundred and seventy-five out of the approximately three hundred pre-

¹⁸ See the *Cincinnati Times Star*, November 2, 1897, p. 1, and A. Julius Freiberg, "The Cincinnati Situation," *Proceedings of the Atlantic City Conference for Good City Government, 1906* (Philadelphia, 1906), p. 126, for additional information.

¹⁹ *Cincinnati Times-Star*, November 2, 1897, p. 2.

cincts, and piled up a plurality of some thirty thousand votes out of ninety thousand cast in Hamilton County.²⁰

While the "Old Boy's" power increased in Cincinnati and Hamilton County during the early years of the twentieth century, it by no means remained at a standstill in the state at large. As far back as 1895 a combine of Cox, Foraker, and Conger had nominated Asa Bushnell as gubernatorial candidate at the state convention, endorsed J. B. Foraker for the United States Senate, and made Mr. Kurtz chairman of the state committee.²¹ William McKinley received their endorsement for president, but the other actions hit directly at his face. Four years later Mr. Hanna carried on certain correspondence with Mr. Cox, and the convention which met soon after nominated George K. Nash for governor.²² In 1902 a special session of the legislature, inspired by Senator Hanna, adopted a municipal code which "should apply to all cities of the state." Instead of taking the Cleveland form, which Mayor Tom Johnson characterized as "an excellent plan of municipal government," "they went to Cincinnati, a city governed by a self-confessed boss, . . . for the model," largely because of the influence of that boss.²³ Although the year 1905 eventually turned out disastrously, the "Old Boy" dominated the state convention and favored the nomination of Myron T. Herrick, late ambassador to France, as governor.²⁴ Mr. Cox reached the height of his power in state politics in 1907 when Senator Foraker wrote that the

²⁰ Statement of Nicholas Longworth in the U. S. House of Representatives. See *Congressional Record*, 58 Cong., 2 sess., XXXVIII, Part I, 846.

²¹ Herbert Croly, *Marcus Alonzo Hanna, His Life and Work*, pp. 176-177.

²² Herbert Croly, *Marcus Alonzo Hanna, His Life and Work*, pp. 294-295, prints the correspondence.

²³ Tom L. Johnson, *My Story* (New York, 1911), p. 164.

²⁴ See the *New York Tribune*, November 8, 1905, 1:3.

Hamilton County delegations "practically controlled the politics of Ohio."²⁵ From 1888 on the "Old Boy" had attended most of the Republican national conventions and in 1904 received election as national committeeman from Ohio. He refused to accept the place, however, because of the party split involved.

Defeat loomed threateningly on the political horizon of Mr. Cox in 1905. The *Cincinnati Post* by waging a virulent warfare succeeded in having some twenty-eight hundred illegal voters excused from voting, and William Howard Taft adversely influenced the election by an address delivered at Akron. Among other things he said, "The whole government of both county and city are absolutely under his (Cox's) control, and even Republican political conventions nominate the men whom he dictates. . . . There is probably not more corruption in Cincinnati than in many other cities not particularly well governed. . . . Cox and his subordinates represent the regular Republican organization in Hamilton County. No one else can lawfully claim to do so."²⁶ Altogether the boss lost the mayor by 6,530 votes, several city offices, and the government of the state; yet he managed to maintain control of Hamilton County and of the city council. After the election he issued another of his famous resignations, "I wish to announce to the public that from this day, after twenty years of active service in the ranks of the Republican party, my personal activity in politics shall cease. I will continue to vote the Republican ticket, but others must bear the burden of future campaigns."²⁷

With his opponents in power the legislature in 1906 undertook an investigation of Cincinnati politics. Several sittings convened which sufficed "to show the people a most

²⁵ *Notes of a Busy Life*, I, 383.

²⁶ For a complete report of the Akron speech see the *Cincinnati Times-Star*, October 23, 1905, p. 6.

²⁷ *New York Tribune*, November 8, 1905, 1:3.

brazen, systematic scheme to fleece them out of their money."²⁸ Then Mr. Cox succeeded in having the courts declare such an investigation illegal and the sittings ceased. The 1906 election brought another local defeat. This time the allied Democrats, Prohibitionists, and Independents polled some six thousand more votes than the "magnificently perfected Republican organization."

Arriving at the very pinnacle of political power in 1907 Mr. Cox elected his tickets by sizable pluralities of approximately twenty thousand votes, forgot past resignations, and regained his lost power with interest.²⁹ Hitherto coöperating with the Foraker forces in the state, he now joined forces with the Tafts. Although William Howard Taft had displeased him by the address at Akron in 1905 which received a great deal of comment, Mr. Cox sent an enthusiastic Taft delegation to the Republican national convention in 1908.³⁰ In 1910 the "Old Boy" backed Warren G. Harding for the United States Senate.

Although the reform administration of 1905 had been far from popular, Henry T. Hunt, a young lawyer come recently from an eastern law school, managed to elect himself prosecuting attorney in 1908. His first term produced no serious consequences for the boss of Cincinnati, because he stood almost alone as an anti-machine man. At Hunt's reelection in 1910 Mr. Cox elected eight common pleas judges but allowed Judge Gorman to slip in as a ninth. Judge Gorman and Attorney Hunt worked together on the problem of breaking the machine, and a grand jury met in 1911 to investigate certain rumors to the effect that Mr. Cox had received interest on public funds. Called before the grand

²⁸ A. Julius Freiberg, "The Cincinnati Situation," *Proceedings of the Atlantic City Conference for Good City Government*, 1906, p. 131.

²⁹ See the *Cincinnati Times-Star*, November 6, 1907, p. 1, for additional details of the election.

³⁰ Joseph B. Foraker, *Notes of a Busy Life*, I, 383-384.

jury, the "Old Boy" categorically denied having received such monies, and the grand jury proceeded to indict him for perjury. However, before the indictment came to trial, Mr. Cox got it quashed.³¹

Attorney Hunt, as candidate for mayor, led the opposition in the municipal election of 1911. The perjury indictment made a live campaign issue, and the Democrats won a decisive victory, electing Mr. Hunt as mayor, practically all of the city officials, and a majority of the councilmen. This defeat exceeded in importance even the bad losses of 1897 and 1905, and although the new administration scarcely lived up to expectations, the boss did not entirely recover. In 1913 he became active again and elected most of his ticket. However, a lieutenant of long standing, Rud Hynicka, increasingly took over the active leadership, while Mr. Cox devoted himself to expanding business interests.

Large in physique and averaging about two hundred and twenty-five pounds in weight, Mr. Cox could fairly be designated a "physical giant," not only because of his size but because of his "great physical courage."³² He had a florid complexion and heavy features, wore a mustache, and, except for a "fishy eye," might have been called "handsome."³³ A hoarse, base voice received such slight exercise that it seemed to have acquired the rustiness of age. At times regarded as sullen and always imperturbable, the "Old Boy" on occasion could be quite genial in his way, although his way did not involve much speech beyond "yes" and "no." Once commenced on one of his rare communications, he had the reputation among a very few friends of being "an inter-

³¹ See *Ohio State Reports*, LXXXVII, 318-319. For further information on the attempt to break Mr. Cox, see George Kibbe Turner, "The Thing Above the Law, The Rise and Rule of George B. Cox," *McClure's Magazine*, XXXVIII (1911-12), 588-589.

³² *Cincinnati Commercial Tribune*, May 21, 1916, p. 9.

³³ *New York Tribune*, July 31, 1895, 10:4.

esting talker, who had a rare fund of reminiscences and experiences with public men."³⁴ President Harding once wrote, "He was one of the squarest men I ever met in all my political activities. I found him frank, truthful, considerate, and rejoiced to count him as one of my good friends."³⁵ Frank Kelly, a friend of early days, declares that "Cox was always shy. His shyness gave people the impression that he was cold and distant."³⁶

Known as the "Easy Boss of Cincinnati," Mr. Cox sometimes belied his name. He led his forces rather easily, yet exacted absolute obedience. Those who obeyed could expect loyalty in return, and all others learned by experience to expect undying hatred.³⁷ Nevertheless, as a "keen judge of men and human nature" and with "clear discernment of the effect of proposed measures," he well knew when to threaten and when to entice.³⁸ In contrast to the reputation for generosity which many city bosses cherish Mr. Cox preferred to be known as a close man, largely because of early experiences at loaning money. However, he apparently gave fairly large sums anonymously, although altogether he guarded his material possessions rather closely.³⁹ Until well along in the present century the "Old Boy" maintained headquarters at "Dead Man's Corner" and in an upstairs room over the "Mecca" saloon. Here he gave audience to all who presented themselves and personally interviewed every applicant for a job on the public payroll. For years he stood every evening at a given place on the sidewalk, observing the passing throng and now and then giving a word to some one of his acquaintances or followers. After he entered the

³⁴ *Cincinnati Enquirer*, May 21, 1916, p. 9.

³⁵ *New York Times*, November 29, 1921, 13:2.

³⁶ *Cincinnati Post*, May 20, 1916, p. 1.

³⁷ *New York Tribune*, July 31, 1895, 10:4.

³⁸ *Cincinnati Enquirer*, May 21, 1916, p. 6.

³⁹ *Cincinnati Commercial Tribune*, May 21, 1916, p. 9.

financial world and established offices at the Cincinnati Trust Company, his lieutenants, Herrmann and Hynicka, filled minor places, but he still remained on the alert and seldom left the city. The greater part of late evenings he spent at a saloon in the German section of the city, maintaining contacts with that important element of his constituency. Although he willingly received advice and sometimes followed it, he rarely, if ever, shared his plans with even his closest friends. This secretiveness together with undue sensitiveness caused the falling away of many followers toward the end of the "Old Boy's" career.

As an organizer Mr. Cox excelled, perhaps because as he once declared he believed that "when candidates think they are successful because of their personal popularity they deceive themselves. It is the unpopularity of the opposing candidate that runs them ahead of the ticket. You will find that hatred and revenge are much stronger factors than gratitude. They say that a man may be stronger than his party; but I don't believe it. Party organization and party responsibility are what count in the long run."⁴⁰ In the first place he employed a card index which contained information of various sorts about practically every voter in Hamilton County. The twenty-five wards of the city acted as the chief divisions of his machine. Each had a rather complete organization, with a committee and, more important, a leader who owed personal responsibility to Mr. Cox. The "Old Boy" controlled ward bosses by aiding those who secured satisfactory results and encouraging revolts against those who proved inefficient. Two hundred and fifty and later three hundred precincts, each with an elected leader, subdivided the wards into actual working areas. Most of the precinct leaders held minor jobs on the public payroll, while the ward leaders sat in the council or headed city departments. Not-

⁴⁰ *Cincinnati Enquirer*, May 21, 1916, p. 10.

withstanding the card index and smooth-working machine Mr. Cox was not satisfied and hence reached out further to secure his power. Property owners favored him, because he insisted above all else on a low tax rate. Nicholas Longworth, speaker of the House of Representatives, once spoke Mr. Cox's praises on the floor of Congress and mentioned among his achievements the fact that Cincinnati enjoyed the "lowest tax rate of any city in the state of Ohio."⁴¹ Financial concerns received deposits of public funds, business interests with large property holdings rejoiced at low valuations, saloons, gambling joints, and courtesans operated without annoying restrictions and ordinarily did not pay blackmail, and lodges beamed because most of the boss's political followers belonged. Even the churches frequently became centers of strength, in as much as Mr. Cox tried to give an office or two to leading members and sometimes asked clergymen to make recommendations.⁴²

Mr. Cox achieved a place among the political bosses who have amassed more than a million dollars, although "his lack of knowledge of financial affairs was the cause of his undoing."⁴³ He entered the financial world in 1903 by purchasing a controlling interest in the Cincinnati Trust Company and ensconcing himself behind its doors as president. This institution once pining away soon took a new lease on life and became a strong savings bank of the city after its president had written to all the school teachers after this fashion, "I will be greatly pleased to have your business and support, and to have you call on me at the bank."⁴⁴ He

⁴¹ *Congressional Record*, 58 Cong., 2 sess., XXXVIII, Part I, 846.

⁴² For additional information concerning the machine which Mr. Cox constructed in Cincinnati, see Henry C. Wright, *Bossism in Cincinnati*, pp. 68-103, and A. Julius Freiberg, "The Cincinnati Situation," *Proceedings of the Atlantic City Conference for Good City Government*, 1906, p. 126.

⁴³ *Cincinnati Enquirer*, May 21, 1916, p. 6.

⁴⁴ See Henry C. Wright, *Bossism in Cincinnati*, pp. 108-109.

owned part of the Cincinnati Reds and after a time became president of the Cincinnati, Dayton, and Toledo Traction Company. Along in 1908 he gained controlling interest in the Ford-Johnson Chair Company, a concern manufacturing chairs by the use of convict labor. The perjury indictment of 1911 diminished confidence in the bank, the state superintendent of banks ordered state deposits removed, and an examination showed that the bank had illegally loaned the Ford-Johnson Company \$115,000. The bank passed to other hands, and Mr. Cox came to trial in 1913 for misapplying \$115,000 of the bank's funds, but the court returned a verdict of "no evidence indicating attempt at fraud."⁴⁵ Although the "Old Boy" lost heavily in the bank, the disaster did not seriously cripple him, for in the same year he purchased an additional \$582,000 worth of Shubert Theatre stock.⁴⁶ At the same time he began to pay considerable attention to the motion picture business, and in 1916 his World Film Corporation merging with the Equitable Company became a part of the largest concern of its kind then in the world. Besides being president of the World Film Corporation Mr. Cox held the place of chairman of the board of directors of the Shubert Theatre Company, vice-president of the Marcus Loew Amusement Company, vice-president of the United Theatres Company, and main stockholder in the Olympic Theatre Company. Then, too, he owned parts of the Strand Theatre, the Walnut Theatre, and the Family Theatre of Cincinnati and the Forty-fourth Street Theatre of New York. He held stock in the Keith Vaudeville Circuit and the Dayton Operating Company.⁴⁷ When Mr. Cox

⁴⁵ *Cincinnati Times-Star*, July 16, 1913, p. 1.

⁴⁶ *New York Times*, December 6, 1913, 22:2.

⁴⁷ For additional information in regard to the numerous business interests of Mr. Cox, see the *Cincinnati Times-Star*, May 20, 1916, p. 1; *Cincinnati Enquirer*, May 23, 1916, p. 14; and *Cincinnati Enquirer*, May 21, 1916, p. 10.

died in 1916, he left an estate with an estimated value of \$1,100,000. Personal property represented \$1,000,000 of the estate and real estate about \$100,000.⁴⁸

Marrying Caroline, daughter of Samuel Shields of Cincinnati, Mr. Cox built an expensive residence at Clifton where he lived rather frugally. The Coxes had no children, but Mr. Cox spent much time with his wife whom he once publicly characterized as "loving and devoted."⁴⁹ They motored every afternoon except Monday irrespective of the weather. On Monday they invariably attended the theatre. Mr. Cox delighted in the theatre and in baseball games. He displayed slight interest in religious matters and did not identify himself with the organized church. However, he did hold membership in the Elks Lodge. The near relatives who survived him included his wife, a brother, Alfred H., sometime city hall custodian, two sisters, and a niece. Mrs. Cox, sole legatee, erected an elaborate theatre, known as the "George B. Cox Memorial Theatre," in memory of her husband.

Unlike many political overlords Mr. Cox acknowledged the title of "boss," declaring that "a boss is not necessarily a public enemy," and once during his halcyon days made a catalogue of the reasons for his political success.⁵⁰ His diagnosis, while platitudinous and biased as self-made explanations usually are, nevertheless, possesses considerable interest. It runs thus :

First, and above all things, I owe my success to the loyalty of my friends.
I treat fairly with men at all times, leaving no doubt as to where I stand.
I am upright in all my dealings.

⁴⁸ This estimate was made by Attorney Heidingfeld, Mr. Cox's lawyer, and is available through the courtesy of the municipal reference bureau of the University of Cincinnati.

⁴⁹ *Cincinnati Post*, May 20, 1916, p. 1.

⁵⁰ *Cincinnati Post*, May 20, 1916, p. 1.

I use my judgment as to the class of candidates most acceptable to the people. Whenever I have defaulted in that, I have been unsuccessful.

I never allow personal feelings to sway me in a political matter. I have no personal or private interests when it comes to a question of doing that which is to be for the benefit of the party.

I always weigh everything submitted to me very carefully, and after doing so, will not change my mind.⁵¹

Toward the end of his political days in 1911 Mr. Cox summed up his career in this wise: "I evolved into a boss because of my peculiar fitness. I have never made a dollar out of politics. I have seen to it that the city has the right kind of men to serve it. I have eliminated the use of big sums for election purposes. . . . I take great pride in my achievement of taking the schools, the fire and police departments out of politics. This was my first work after I became boss of Cincinnati. It was through my efforts that Cincinnati obtained its water works. . . . I would strenuously advise young men not to enter politics. In the first place there is no money in it for the honest man, and in the second place there is only abuse."⁵²

⁵¹ *American Monthly Review of Reviews*, XXIX (1904), 99.

⁵² *Cincinnati Post*, May 20, 1916, p. 1.



Pacific and Atlantic Photo

FRED LUNDIN

CHAPTER XV

"THE MYSTERY MAN OF CHICAGO"

If any political boss controverts the theory of the "typical boss," it is Frederick Lundin, variously known as the "Silent Boss," "Poor Swede," and "Congressman." In racial stock, physique, mental traits, and political career Lundin differs from the big-faced, heavy-weight, Irish boss who, beginning with a gang of toughs, branches out into the tumble of ward politics and through sheer might and main clammers to the top.

It happens that Mr. Lundin is the only representative from Sweden or of Swedish racial stock among the bosses with which this study deals. Born in Sweden on May 18, 1868, he emigrated with his parents, the Frederick Lundins, Senior, to the United States and arrived finally in Minneapolis at the age of eleven years. Within a few months he moved from Minneapolis to Chicago where he lived and worked until prosperity led to an establishment at Lake Villa.¹

The Lundin family, which included a daughter and at least two sons in addition to Frederick, enjoyed slight material prosperity. Hence Fred went to work as a newsboy and shoe-shine two days after arriving in Chicago. He had attended school for about two years in his native land but knew practically nothing of the English language. However, in spite of the fact that he received no further schooling in the United States, he possessed an agile mind and soon learned those things necessary to a Chicago paper boy.²

After a few months of selling papers and shining shoes Fred found a job which lasted for six years with the clothing

¹ See the *Congressional Directory*, 61 Cong., 3 sess., (2nd. ed., Washington, 1911), p. 22; *New York Times*, January 30, 1923, 21:1; and *Chicago Tribune*, May 31, 1921, 5:1-6, and July 10, 1923, 1:7.

² Available through the courtesy of Assistant State's Attorney A. Kelly.

firm of Gross and Company. Then he worked at the milk business for a year and a half until the soft drink business lured him to beverage making. According to his own sworn testimony he had no capital with which to start in this business but "sold his dog, pawned his watch and overcoat" and began to manufacture a drink which he concocted under the name of "Juniper Ade."³

In his early days Lundin, with a wagon and two negro-singers equipped with banjos, covered most of the foreign sections of Chicago during summer evenings. The darkies sang "There's no place like home," and their master contributed to the show by urging the assembled Irish, Germans, and Scandinavians in an "impresario voice of astonishing proportions" to buy "Juniper Ade," extract "a teaspoon of which makes a gallon of the beverage just like you drank back home."⁴ The multitude apparently bought the drink eagerly, for within a few years Lundin sold thousands of gallons all over the United States. He later testified that he had expended more than a million dollars in advertising his elixir over a period of thirty years.⁵

Within two years of the venture in the manufacturing of "Juniper Ade" Lundin expanded his business to include patent medicines of various kinds. He featured a wondrous pill which was said to cure "all ills from Bright's disease to pyorrhea."⁶ Then a general merchandise mail order concern, handling clothing, groceries, carriages, and machinery and specializing in imported fish, complemented the soft drink and patent medicine lines. The mail order business passed to other hands in 1915.

The political dictator of the German and Scandinavian folk of the northwest side of Chicago, when Lundin arrived on the scene, was one Henry L. Hertz, a Dane renowned for

³ *Chicago Tribune*, July 10, 1923, 1:7.

⁴ *Chicago Tribune*, May 31, 1921, 5:1-6.

⁵ *Chicago Tribune*, July 10, 1923.

⁶ *New York Times*, July 29, 1923, sec. 7, 2:7-8.

his "wooden leg and fierce mustache." Lundin joined forces with Hertz and after a time became one of the important figures in the politics of the district. Early in the nineties William Lorimer, already a power on the southwest side of the city, and Jamieson, also influential politically, in setting out to gain control of the northwest side observed the influence of the young Swedish soft-drink maker and persuaded him to throw in his lot with them. The resulting alliance, which endured until about the time of Lorimer's senatorial disgrace, proved very important in Lundin's career.

By using Lorimer's backing the "Poor Swede" succeeded in politics rather better than had been the case before, when his past record as medicine man and "Juniper Ade" harranguer had not always encouraged people to take him seriously. Although fairly active, therefore, in politics beginning with 1890, he did not arrive at the fever stage until rivals in the soft drink business began to infringe on "Juniper Ade" by selling at a lower price a drink with a similar name and taste. "Juniper Ade" was patented and hence Lundin sought and obtained injunctions. But the rivals changed the color of the carton, and the consulting attorney advised that the only way to satisfactorily meet the situation would be to become politically powerful.⁷ So the "Poor Swede" in 1894 made a campaign in the Eleventh District for a seat in the state senate. He not only won election to the senate but two years later managed a reelection. It is not beside the point to note that the Eleventh District, which had been consistently represented in the state senate by Democrats since 1882, changed its character with the appearance of Lundin and continued to send Republican representatives through 1922.⁸

⁷ See Lundin's sworn testimony as reported in the *Chicago Tribune*, July 10, 1923, 2:2.

⁸ See the *Blue Book of the State of Illinois, 1925-1926* (Danville, 1925), pp. 727-796.

As a state senator the "Juniper Ade" man took an active part in the senate proceedings. The nature of his activities strangely enough brands him as a utopian, for such measures as one dividing all human necessities into seventy-eight categories and prohibiting a merchant in the clock category from dealing in the stove category or another which provided that telephone companies must allow regular subscribers free use of pay telephones but made no provision for their identification can scarcely be regarded as practical. However, a bill which proposed a revision of the tax laws so that companies, owning little taxable real property within the state but carrying on a large volume of business, might be taxed on the basis of "gross sales, net profit, or gross income" indicates considerable ingenuity in matters of tax reform.⁹

Despite his retirement from the Illinois senate in 1898 Lundin did not lose interest in politics. Instead, as he testified in his trial for conspiracy, "all the time, night and day, when I didn't sleep, I was thinking of politics."¹⁰ Mr. Lorimer had been elected to the national House of Representatives in 1894 and from that time until 1908, with the exception of the years 1900-1902, spent the greater part of his time in Washington. Lundin increasingly looked after the Lorimer interests in Chicago until in 1908 he joined Lorimer in Washington for a time. During the years from 1898 to 1908 Lundin served at times as a member of the county central committee of the Republican organization and as member auxiliary of the Republican state central committee. In the midst of the period he made a campaign as Republican

⁹ See *Chicago Tribune*, May 31, 1921, 5:1-6 and June 1, 1921, 4:1, and *Hearings Before a Committee of the Senate of the United States Pursuant to Senate Resolution 60 Directing a Committee of the Senate to Investigate Whether Corrupt Methods and Practices Were Used or Employed in the Election of William Lorimer as a Senator of the United States from the State of Illinois*, 62 Cong., 2 sess., Senate documents 16-24 (9 vols., Washington, 1912), VII, 6638-6639.

¹⁰ *Chicago Tribune*, July 10, 1923, 2:2.

nominee for city clerk of Chicago but was defeated at the polls.¹¹

In 1908 the "Poor Swede" received the congressional nomination in the Seventh District of Illinois and managed election to the tune of 31,513 votes against the 20,088 votes polled by his Democratic opponent. Lorimer began his term in the Senate of the United States at the same time that Lundin began his career in the House of Representatives, and they lived together in an apartment at the Washington Young Men's Christian Association.¹²

Two committees of the House of Representatives, the committees on mileage and on public buildings and grounds, neither of first rate importance, enrolled Lundin as a member.¹³ In all he introduced twenty-three bills and joint resolutions and took a fairly active part in the proceedings. Nineteen of these twenty-three bills had to do with private pensions and relief of one kind and another, two provided for the erection of public buildings in Chicago, one of the bills sought to change the name of "oleomargarine" to the more euphonious "margarine," and one proposed Lundin's pet scheme—an old age pension commission.¹⁴ The "Congressman" spoke only once during his term and that was when his old-age pension commission bill came before the house for consideration. On this occasion he delivered a somewhat extended address, embodying material gathered from sending out "several hundred thousand letters, asking for opinions as to the advisability of such a commission." Among other things he said in the defense of his measure, "To protect an American citizen, regardless of land of birth, our army, our navy, and our wealth are at command. Why not consider a broader step and hold him harmless from

¹¹ *Chicago Tribune*, June 1, 1921, 4:1-4, and July 10, 1923, 2:2.

¹² *Hearings in the Election of William Lorimer*, VII, 6640.

¹³ *Congressional Record*, 61 Cong., 1 sess., XLIV, 66, 5092.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, XLV, 166, 336, 8854.

want and penury in the period of old age? The disposition of corporations and civil service commissions is to discriminate against men and women over 35, 40, 45, and 50 years of age; therefore, some provision should be made so that the toiler who has enriched others with a life of labor, but is himself without an accumulation of gold, can still rely in his declining years on deserved public reward under the nation's law. . . . Why not extend the Government's recognition as gratefully to the soldier of peace, who is as necessary as the soldier of war if he has fought honorably and well the battle of the shop, the mine, the forest, and the farm? . . . Mechanical machinery is protected by a fund for depreciation, but human machinery is protected against nothing—neither wear nor tear, nor humiliation, nor death.”¹⁵ In 1910 Lundin again became a candidate for Congress, but the Democrats carried the election by approximately fifteen hundred votes. This happened to be the first Republican defeat in the Seventh District since 1875.¹⁶

Before the episode of 1910 there had been some talk that Lundin might be the Republican nominee for mayor of Chicago. However, the Congressional fiasco dampened that movement and caused the “Poor Swede” to announce his retirement from politics. It has been supposed that Mr. Lundin largely directed the fight made by William Lorimer to retain his seat in the United States Senate. At all odds he rallied the old Lorimer forces in Chicago during the dark days and in 1912 organized the remnants into the Lincoln Protective League. This being badly defeated in its first tryout, he revamped the organization and rechristened it the “Republican Club of Illinois.”

When William Hale Thompson, in the process of forming the Illinois Athletic Club, invited the “Congressman”

¹⁵ *Congressional Record*, 61 Cong. 3 sess., XLV, 8853-8857.

¹⁶ *Illinois Blue Book, 1917-1919* (Danville, 1918), p. 437.

to become a member, he opened a promising path into the future. After Thompson, as candidate for commissioner of Cook County, lost the election in 1912, Lundin urged him to set his bag for the office of mayor in 1915 and promised to direct the campaign if he would run. With three years yet to elapse before election day the "Poor Swede" started active preparations and devoted practically every day and night during the interval to making Thompson mayor of Chicago. He testified in court, after it was all over, that he attended every meeting held during the period and went home only four times all told during the three years.¹⁷

The Democrats nominated a Chicagoan by the name of R. M. Sweitzer for their mayoralty aspirant in the election of 1915. He stood well with the Roman Catholic element but occupied a shaky position with the Protestants and in addition had incurred the enmity of the Democrats directed by former Mayor Harrison. The Republicans, prior to 1915, had split into several factions, led by Mr. Charles Deneen, later to become United States senator, Mr. Brundage, sometime attorney general of Illinois, and several others. Each faction preferred almost anything rather than have a rival group dominate. With the Democrats and Republicans both divided, luck favored Lundin. Hard work for three years coupled with such happy circumstances brought definite success in the city election. His mayoralty candidate received a plurality of 147,977 votes, the largest ever given a mayor of Chicago up to that time.¹⁸

With "Big Bill" Thompson in office as mayor and the city council under Republican control Mr. Lundin proceeded to change his "skin," casting off the patent medicine vender's open methods and persuasive harangue, and assuming in their

¹⁷ See *Chicago Tribune*, July 10, 1923, 2:2.

¹⁸ *Chicago Tribune*, April 7, 1915, 1:3.

place the character of a "Mystery Man."¹⁹ Although offered his choice of the offices at the mayor's disposal, he "refused flat" and consented to serve only on a patronage committee which he designated the "committee of kicks." With twenty thousand or more places at his disposal and a labor situation with an estimated two hundred thousand out of employment threatening trouble Mayor Thompson did not care to handle the task of parceling out the jobs. After calling on two hundred business and professional men, among whom was Charles G. Dawes, for advice in regard to appointments, Thompson appointed Pike, Pugh, and Lundin to serve as a patronage committee. Pike and Pugh left the actual work to Lundin. He interviewed job seekers in person, received their applications, sorted them over, and made recommendations to the mayor.²⁰

In transforming himself after 1915 Mr. Lundin merely followed out his past record of doing unusual things. Hitherto he had occupied a place fairly visible to the public eye. Now he withdrew to a place apart. He refrained from visiting the city hall for six years, ceased to appear on the streets or in public places, refused to talk with public officials over the telephone, sent out letters with a typewritten signature, and paid bills in currency instead of by check. Instead of receiving callers he employed go-betweens to deliver messages and transact business while he secluded himself in his suite at Hotel Sherman, or at his country place at Lake Villa, or in his fire door offices at 310 South Canal Street.²¹ Some explained this change by the fate of William Lorimer. Others made no pretense of accounting for such a move on the part of Lundin.

¹⁹ Lundin usually controlled 51 of the 57 active votes in the city council. See the *Chicago Tribune*, May 18, 1915, 13:8.

²⁰ See the Lundin-Thompson court testimony, *Chicago Tribune*, February 18, 1923, sec. 7, 14:1; July 7, 1923, 2:1; and July 10, 1923, 2:2.

²¹ See the *Chicago Tribune*, June 3, 1921, 4:2-6.

Physically the "Poor Swede" is not especially distinctive. He weighs approximately one hundred and fifty pounds and attains a height of about five feet and nine inches. His picturesque clothes easily eclipse physical characteristics. The long-tailed, black undertaker's coat, the boiled, white shirt, the resplendent black tie, the wide-brimmed cowboy hat, and the amber-colored glasses are the same in type, if not in identity, that the "Juniper Ade" orator wore in the early nineties. Nondescript-colored hair hangs tousled and ruffled. But his face, while benevolent, does not lack in elements of strength.²²

Despite scarcely two years of schooling and that in Sweden Mr. Lundin handles English with fluency, rarely breaking into error. He possesses tremendous industry, surprising tenacity, and not a little administrative ability. In a certain respect his sense of honesty assumes unusual delicacy. As an illustration he refused for many years to allow any of his firms to sell to a public institution.²³ On the other hand after an election campaign in which the churches and reformers received all sorts of specious promises of good government, the Thompson administration, with the "Mystery Man" behind the throne, soon broke practically every preëlection pledge. Vice conditions became worse than ever and they had been bad. The civil service commission found itself almost completely blocked. Despite the law in regard to appointments 30,675 temporary appointments were made during the first five years of the regime.²⁴

As a politician the "Congressman" employed methods than can scarcely be designated as consistent. Various clubs, enrolling all ages of both sexes by offering inducements of

²² Lundin descriptions of more or less vividness may be found in the *New York Times*, January 30, 1923, 21:1, and the *Chicago Tribune*, May 30, 1921, 17:1-3, and July 10, 1923, 1:7.

²³ See Lundin's sworn testimony in the *Chicago Tribune*, July 10, 1923, 1:7.

²⁴ *Chicago Tribune*, June 2, 1921, 5:4, and January 18, 1923, 1:7.

one kind and another, remind one of the old soft drink and patent medicine vender. Social opportunities attracted the young, outings for restless children warmed the hearts of weary parents, excursions for tired mothers lined many housewives along side of the machine, and playgrounds, civic jubilees, and all sorts of bally-hoo won publicity.²⁵ On the other hand card indexes, containing full information relating to the political henchmen and to the rank and file of voters of Chicago, savor slightly of the spectacular and superficial. This card system, indeed, worked so well that slothful persons, not delivering votes or otherwise serving the organization, found it very difficult to get on the public payroll or secure favor.²⁶

However well developed may have been his voice in the old days, and there is good evidence that he spoke ably, the "Poor Swede" seldom used it after he came into control of Chicago. He once said that he had had nothing but difficulty with newspapers and hence refused to talk for publication.²⁷ Resenting public curiosity, the "Mystery Man" was not willing to admit his political influence and blamed Attorney General Brundage for starting the slogan that he was the "Czar" of Chicago.

In spite of the "Congressman's" appellation of himself as a "Poor Swede" he has by no means lacked prosperity. The "Juniper Ade," patent medicine, and mail order lines have already been mentioned. He spent more than a million dollars in advertising "Juniper Ade" and cleared \$28,000 in one year alone. The mail order business paid an annual salary of \$15,000 and the steel door company \$5,000.²⁸

²⁵ *New York Times*, July 20, 1923, sec. 7, 2:7-8.

²⁶ *Chicago Tribune*, June 4, 1924, 4:3.

²⁷ Lundin once said, "The *Tribune* and *News* have hounded me for years. . . . I have never been commended for any act" by the press. See the *Chicago Tribune*, July 10, 1923, 2:3.

²⁸ See the *Chicago Tribune*, July 10, 1923, 1:5, for a statement made by Lundin himself in regard to his business interests. See also the

Manufacturing of steel doors, to be used as protectors from fire, interested Lundin greatly, especially after he disposed of the mail order business. Among ventures to receive the backing of the "Silent Boss" may be noted the bond and brokerage firm of Rohm and Company which assigned ten thousand dollars as his share of the profits in 1921. It is said that he refused to receive seven thousand dollars of this amount on the ground that some of the business had come from governmental agencies.²⁹ Perhaps for sentimental reasons Lundin owned a farm. A political associate estimates his total wealth at \$200,000.³⁰

At one time Mr. Lundin took part in the club life of Chicago and held memberships in the Columbia Pleasure Club and the Illinois Athletic Club. He also affiliated himself with the Masonic Lodge. After the election of Thompson, however, his social activities waned in spite of a reputation as a good mixer. Mr. Lundin's sport and hobby, as well as the subject of his dreams, according to his own sworn testimony, took the form of politics.³¹ Clarence Darrow, his attorney, characterized him as a man to whom "politics was a game, like bridge or golf to others."³²

Despite the Swedish Lutheran religious affiliation of his father, mother, and sister Lundin displayed slight interest in religion. Instead of attending church services or contributing to religious causes a political associate relates that he had a habit of walking the streets on Sunday morning and handing out to every bum a quarter with which to buy

Chicago Tribune, June 6, 1923, 2:2. Lundin held stock in two steel doors companies: Central Metallic Door Company and National Steel Door Company.

²⁹ *Chicago Tribune*, July 10, 1923, 2:3.

³⁰ The author is indebted to Assistant State's Attorney of Cook County, A. Kelly, for this estimate. After consulting Dun and Bradstreet Mr. Kelly finally obtained this information from an associate.

³¹ *Chicago Tribune*, July 10, 1923, 2:2.

³² *Chicago Tribune*, June 6, 1923, 2:2.

a breakfast.³³ Living with kinsmen, Lars F. and Titus Lundin, at 2580 West Superior Street in Chicago, the "Congressman" had not yet established a home in 1910. But after returning from Washington at the close of his term in Congress, he married a young lady who had for some time been his secretary.

After the great coup of 1915 Lundin's political power increased gradually for six years. In 1921, his zenith year, he dominated most of the officials of the city hall, the office of the state's attorney, the sanitary district, the election machinery, a part of the county officers, and two of the park boards. With the governor of Illinois an ally, much of the patronage in Cook County fell to the "Poor Swede" also. After 1921 his control waned until in the summer of 1923 it had reached a low level.³⁴

Among the first difficulties to challenge the "Mystery Man" came the time-worn matter of closing the Chicago saloons on Sundays and enforcing the excise laws. Another materialized in the pro-German sympathies of Mayor Thompson.³⁵ Although the brewers and saloon interests in general had supported the Democratic nominee, after the election of "Big Bill" they hastened to pay the forty thousand dollar deficit in the Lundin campaign fund.³⁶ Apparently they expected to square themselves in this way for their poor ability as prophets. But a preëlection promise of very definite form had been made to the churches which involved the closing of the saloons of Chicago on Sundays. Shortly after the generous action of the brewers a closing order issued. Such an outcry resulted that the "Silent Boss" and his Mayor left Chicago for parts unknown for a vaca-

³³ Mr. A. Kelly obtained this story for the author.

³⁴ See the *Chicago Tribune*, June 21, 1921, 1:8, and the *New York Times*, February 18, 1923, sec. 7, 14:1.

³⁵ *Chicago Tribune*, June 3, 1921, 4:2-6, and June 4, 1921, 4:1.

³⁶ *Chicago Tribune*, June 3, 1921, 4:2-6.

tion. After the storm had somewhat subsided, they appointed Samuel Ettelson, who stood well with the liquor interests, corporation counsel.

During the second term of Thompson several more perplexing situations came to a head. In 1921 the judicial election went adversely to the Lundin camp by approximately one hundred thousand votes. A little later in the same year the board of aldermen voted several measures which hit the machine squarely in the face, although the aldermen had usually been most dependable.³⁷ At one stroke the board threw out about one thousand temporary appointments and at another reduced the large salaries paid to special lawyers in the employ of the city. Then to increase the Lundin-Thompson discomfiture the state legislature refused to enact a traction bill which provided for a five cent fare. The "Poor Swede" had laid all his cards on this particular piece of legislation and had more than once proclaimed such a law a panacea for all municipal ills and pains. A school land bill, which proposed to allow school boards to dispose of all real estate belonging to the public schools, also failed to pass, although sponsored by the "Mystery Man." Finally in a quarrel in which Chief of Police Charles Fitzmorris and State's Attorney Robert E. Crowe were arrayed on opposite sides, Mayor Thompson, supposedly after consultation with Lundin, supported Fitzmorris and lost the support of Crowe.

Attorney General Brundage, leader of a rival Republican faction, and State's Attorney Crowe, driven to rebellion by Thompson, must receive chief credit for the downfall of the Lundin machine. In the fall of 1922 they made an extended investigation and in January, 1923, brought an indictment against the "Congressman" for conspiracy to defraud the

³⁷ Alderman Charles E. Merriam, of the University of Chicago, consistently opposed the Lundin program. In 1919 he ran as an opponent of Thompson in the mayoralty election but lost out by approximately 20,000 votes.

Chicago board of education of approximately a million dollars.

Meanwhile the "Mystery Man," suffering from an ailment diagnosed as "vertebrae of the spine out of joint," spent his time consulting numerous medical experts and finally ended with the Mayo clinic. He could not walk and, being warned to rest unless he courted paralysis, journeyed to Florida. When the indictment issued, he happened to be at Miami Beach but returned at once of his own volition to Chicago to face trial.

Mayor Thompson faced the task of naming eleven members of the Chicago board of education early in his first term of office. Six of his appointees met together soon after assuming office, drew up a slate of officers, and at the meeting of the board elected their ticket. Thereafter, these members, known as the "Solid Six," met before each meeting in a sort of caucus and decided what business should be transacted at the formal meeting of the board. The old members quite naturally resented such conduct and finally began *quo warranto* proceedings to oust the new members. In 1918 the supreme court of Illinois finally granted their petition. Nevertheless, in 1919 the mayor reappointed the "Solid Six" who at once refused to recognize the newly elected superintendent. The old president of the board, Jacob M. Loeb, especially resented the situation in the board and determined to make war against Lundin whom he held responsible. Another member, Hart Hanson, although a Thompson appointee, opposed the machine members of the board because he had been disappointed in certain contracts for text books.³⁸

This long drawn out fight in the board of education seemed a likely field of investigation to State's Attorney

³⁸ See the *Chicago Tribune*, June 8, 1923, 3:1, January 17, 1923, 5:1, and June 9, 1923, 1:8, for further information on the situation.

Crowe and finally resulted in the indictment of Lundin and nineteen confederates on the charge of conspiracy to defraud the board of education of amounts approximating one million dollars. The alleged frauds included a \$300,000 loss on a boiler deal, a \$65,000 loss on a purchase of phonographs, and a loss of \$162,000 on the leasing of school lands. In the selection of the trial jury five weeks were consumed and 1089 persons examined. The trial, with Clarence Darrow as chief counsel for Lundin, finally got a start early in June of 1923 and concluded on July thirteenth. Toward the end the "Mystery Man" took the stand for two hours and a half and gave an extended account of his life from emigrant boy to overlord of Chicago. He categorically denied the accusations and insisted that he had not interfered in any way with educational matters.³⁹ After being out four hours and a half, the jury found Lundin and co-defendants "not guilty."

In spite of hopeful words to the effect that "truth crushed to earth will rise again" Mr. Lundin found himself seriously crippled after his acquittal. Mayor Thompson passed out of office at the expiration of his second term, and the Democrats came into power with Judge Dever as mayor. After a time Lundin broke with his former protégé and in the spectacular comeback which placed "Big Bill" for a third term in the office of mayor of Chicago actively opposed Thompson.⁴⁰

Until 1928 the "Poor Swede" remained on good terms or at least working terms with Governor Small and hence controlled the disposal of much of the state patronage in Cook County. However, Mayor Thompson and Governor Small patched up their differences later and Lundin consequently ceased to be the official representative of the gover-

³⁹ For Lundin's testimony, see the *Chicago Tribune*, July 10, 1923, pp. 1 and 2. For accounts of the legal proceedings, see *Chicago Tribune*, June 1, 1923, 11:1; June 5, 1923, 1:8; and July 14, 1923, 1:8.

⁴⁰ *New York Times*, February 16, 1927.

nor in Chicago.⁴¹ During the summer of 1927 Lundin made a trip to Scandinavia.⁴²

During the past three or four years Lundin has been only fairly active in Chicago and Cook County politics. He has usually during this period been able to control four or five of the wards. There are recent rumors, which may mean something and again may be mere speculations, to the effect that the "Poor Swede" is planning to expand his political influence.⁴³

⁴¹ *Indianapolis News*, February 8, 1928.

⁴² *New York Times*, July 14, 1927, p. 23.

⁴³ *New York Times*, December 15, 1929, sec. 3, p. 2.



Pacific and Atlantic Photo

ROGER C. SULLIVAN

CHAPTER XVI

ROGER C. SULLIVAN

The political career of Roger Sullivan covers roughly the same period as that of Frederick Lundin, the "Mystery Man of Chicago." Becoming active in the game during the eighties, Mr. Sullivan experienced many of the ups and downs that inevitably accompany such a career but managed to gradually augment his power, until for the ten years preceding his death in 1920 he handled Democratic affairs in Chicago and Cook County as master.

With a father who had emigrated to the United States Mr. Sullivan belonged to the ranks of the Irish in racial stock. He was born February 3, 1861, on a farm near Belvidere, Boone County, Illinois. The Sullivan family, which included nine children, lived for some years on the farm, deprived of many of the advantages which money provides. After the premature death of the father Roger, at the time a mere lad, helped eke out a meager living for younger brothers and sisters.¹

Because of the general poverty of the family as well as the early death of the father, young Sullivan, who was then commonly known as "Roger" as he was by intimates and strangers alike throughout life, did not complete grammar school. Instead, according to his own testimony, he went to work as a farm hand at a wage of eight dollars per month.² At the age of eighteen years he concluded that he had had enough of Boone County farming, journeyed to Chicago, and obtained a job in the West Side railroad machine shops.

¹ The author is indebted to Mr. Boetius Sullivan for information concerning the family and early life of Roger Sullivan. Additional information may be had in the *New York Tribune*, September 8, 1906, 2:2; *New York Times*, April 15, 1920, 11:4; and *Chicago Tribune*, October 28, 1914, 1:1, and April 29, 1920, 13:1.

² See *Chicago Tribune*, October 28, 1914, 1:1.

Led on by a "keen interest in affairs and an unusual aptitude for making and holding friends," Sullivan speedily entered Chicago politics.³ He rendered valuable service to the Democratic organization in the early eighties in spite of his rural freshness and received a reward from President Cleveland in the form of an appointment as a revenue agent. In 1889 he began to attend Democratic county conventions and in his later days boasted that he had not missed a convention for thirty-one years. By 1890 he had advanced so far in the organization that he received the office of probate clerk, a position which he occupied until 1894. This completed his career as a public office holder, although he aspired unsuccessfully to a seat in the United States Senate in 1914.

During these early years in local politics Mr. Sullivan made the acquaintance of John P. Hopkins who in 1894 became mayor of Chicago. This acquaintance developed into a very warm friendship. In the year in which Mr. Hopkins became mayor, the People's Gas Company exclusively handled the gas business of the city. It seemed feasible to a small group centered around Sullivan to set up a rival concern which, by means of a rate war, might compel the People's Company to divide its profitable business. After the council had passed the necessary ordinance granting the franchise and Mayor Hopkins had affixed his signature, the Ogden Gas Company came into existence with Roger Sullivan as secretary. Prices of gas fell to forty cents per thousand cubic feet before the People's Company could be persuaded to agree to a division of territory and assigned the Ogden Company the north side as its exclusive domain.⁴ It

³ See a manuscript of B. J. Mullaney dealing with Roger Sullivan. The author is indebted to Mr. Boetius Sullivan for the opportunity of consulting the manuscript. For further material concerning this period of political activity, see the *Chicago Tribune*, September 9, 1906, 5:1; October 27, 1914, 1:1; April 15, 1920, 3:1; and April 27, 1920, 17:1.

⁴ For further particulars of the contest with the People's Gas Company, see the *Chicago Tribune*, October 20, 1914, 4:3, and April 15, 1920, 3:1.

should be said of the Ogden Gas Company that it afterwards charged ten cents per thousand cubic feet less than the old company and established the worthy precedent of paying three and one half per cent of its gross receipts as a franchise tax into the public coffers.⁵

After a time Mr. Sullivan became president of the Ogden Company. He remained at its helm until public sentiment during the years following 1906 led the legislature of Illinois to pass an act providing for the fusion of the People's and Ogden Companies. Then he retired with a sizable bonded interest and at his death still owned Ogden bonds to the extent of \$257,000. At about the time the gas promotion materialized in the form of the Ogden Gas Company, a similar ordinance created the Cosmopolitan Electric Company. Mr. Sullivan owned an interest in this concern, although it apparently did not command his attention and efforts to the extent indicated above in the gas company.⁶

Beginning in 1892 to represent Illinois as a delegate to Democratic national conventions, Rogers Sullivan served in that capacity every four years without fail until 1920, when, although he had expected to attend the San Francisco convention and had prepared a slate of delegates which included Carter Harrison, his old enemy, death, intervened. From 1904 until his death he occupied a prominent place in national politics, serving as national committeeman during the twelve years 1904-1916, controlling the Illinois delegations to the conventions as a general rule, and in 1916 receiving mention as a nominee for vice-president.⁷ In 1912 when the Baltimore national convention stood undecided as to a presidential candidate, Mr. Sullivan, urged on by his son, Boetius,

⁵ See Mr. Sullivan's own statement in the *Chicago Tribune*, August 1, 1906, 3:2-4.

⁶ *Chicago Tribune*, October 27, 1914, 1:1, 8:1.

⁷ See the *New York Times*, June 3, 1916, 1:8, and the *Chicago Tribune*, October 27, 1914, 8:4.

swung the Illinois delegation for Woodrow Wilson. Mr. Tumulty, secretary to President Wilson, admits in his biography of Mr. Wilson that Roger Sullivan "turned the tide . . . in favour of Mr. Wilson's candidacy for the presidency."⁸

Ordinarily Mr. Sullivan controlled the Cook County representation to the Democratic state conventions and in addition managed to have an agreement with enough other delegates to accomplish his plans. As early as 1904 his control had reached the stage where William Jennings Bryan held him responsible for the "train robber convention" of that year. Mr. Bryan, therefore, soon began a tirade which lasted with some interludes until 1920. Altogether Mr. Bryan's attacks, although quite unpleasant, proved beneficial to Sullivan, because they spread his hitherto local fame to every part of the United States. Mr. Bryan, among other things, held that Sullivan's election as national committeeman in 1904 had been accomplished by fraud. Investigations of one sort and another were undertaken by a subcommittee of the national committee and by the committee on credentials of the national convention. These bodies reported to the national committee and to the national convention respectively and in each case gave Sullivan vindication by large majorities.⁹

While Mr. Bryan traveled in Europe in 1906, he wrote certain letters to a political opponent of Mr. Sullivan, Judge Owen P. Thompson, in which he asked Thompson to inform Sullivan that his "presence on the (national) committee contradicts all that we can say in the party's behalf," because "his corporate connections . . . harm the party far beyond

⁸ Joseph P. Tumulty, *Woodrow Wilson As I Know Him* (Garden City, New York, 1921), pp. 98-99.

⁹ For Mr. Bryan's charge, see *Chicago Tribune*, August 1, 1906, 3:2-4. For the committee actions, see *Chicago Tribune*, September 8, 1906, 4:1-2.

his power to aid the organization" and "he holds his office by fraud and against the express wishes of a majority of the delegates to the state convention." Furthermore Mr. Bryan suggested that "if he refuses to resign, and thus puts his ambition or his business before the party's success, the sooner he is ejected from the committee the better."¹⁰ The fact that such a message came through a political enemy naturally angered Mr. Sullivan, and he not only refused to resign but sent out letters to each of the sixteen hundred and forty-five delegates-elect to the state convention stating his position. He summed up his attitude thus, "I do not concede even to Mr. Bryan the right to question my democracy or my membership in the national committee. . . . Democracy stands for home rule in party as well as public affairs. It governs itself by city, town, county, state, and national conventions. It recognizes no dictator, no matter what the name of the would-be dictator."¹¹

When Mr. Bryan returned to the United States, he came to Illinois and demanded that Mr. Sullivan be ousted from Democratic ranks and especially from the national committee. In addition he notified the state convention that he did not wish its endorsement for president unless it carried out his order.¹² Nevertheless, Mr. Sullivan succeeded himself as national committeeman by a vote of forty-nine to five and Bryan received a flattering endorsement. The excitement then settled down for a time. At the Baltimore national convention when Mr. Bryan made his spectacular attempt to have "Commissioner" Charles F. Murphy of Tammany Hall and August Belmont read out of the Democratic party, he omitted strangely enough all mention of his old enemy, Roger C. Sullivan. However, in 1914, another Bryan eruption shot

¹⁰ *Chicago Tribune*, August 1, 1906, 3:2-4.

¹¹ *Chicago Tribune*, August 16, 1906, 3:1.

¹² *New York Tribune*, August 22, 1906, 1:4, and *Chicago Tribune*, September 5, 1906, 1:3.

forth, when Mr. Sullivan announced that he had decided to become a candidate for the office of United States senator.¹³

Influential in state politics and frequently outstandingly powerful in the national arena, Roger Sullivan, nevertheless, made Chicago and Cook County his primary interest. His success in controlling the elections in this special bailiwick suffered from the fact that the Republicans normally outnumbered the Democrats and from incessant feuds within the Democratic party itself. Rivals in the party went so far as to support the Republican ticket, when Sullivan had been victorious at the primaries.¹⁴ Therefore, although he could ordinarily dominate in the party primaries, especially after 1910, the Republicans won a large part of the elections. However, he ordinarily sent several loyal followers to the state legislature, seated a few in the national House of Representatives, and placed a fairly large number in local offices of one kind and another.

The main feud within the Democracy itself, which continued without much abatement until shortly before Mr. Sullivan's death, raged between the Carter H. Harrison forces and the Sullivanites. The Harrisons, supported by Edward F. Dunne, J. Hamilton Lewis, William L. O'Connell, and State's Attorney Hoyne, had dominated Democracy in Chicago for some time, as the mayoralty careers of the two Harrisons well indicate, when the Sullivanites, led by Roger, John P. Hopkins, and George Brennan, challenged their control. Although in the saddle and upheld by considerable patronage, the Harrisons gradually lost out and in 1915 are reported to have wreaked their vengeance by turning their cohorts from R. M. Sweitzer, Sullivan's candidate for mayor, to Fred Lundin's man, "Big Bill" Thompson.¹⁵

¹³ For Bryan's attitude toward Mr. Sullivan's senatorial aspirations, see the *Chicago Tribune*, September 8, 1914, 12:1.

¹⁴ It has been generally understood that Sullivan's enemies in the party voted for "Big Bill" Thompson rather than support Sullivan Democrats.

¹⁵ See the *Chicago Tribune*, April 7, 1915, 1:3.

An aspiration to top his political career, so far largely barren of public offices, by a seat in the United States Senate came to a head in 1914. The Republicans ran Lawrence Sherman, the Progressives Raymond Robbins, and Roger Sullivan won the Democratic nomination without difficulty, although he had three or four rivals.¹⁶ In his campaign for election Mr. Sullivan emphasized "laws to stop criminal practices of big business, a merchant marine, and good roads by federal aid."¹⁷ He visited and spoke in every one of the one hundred and two counties in Illinois. Not content with that feat he furthermore made an address in every county seat in the state and in every ward in Chicago in the interest of his candidacy. President Wilson, hitherto by common report far from cordial, dictated and signed a letter pronouncing himself as favorable to Mr. Sullivan's suit.¹⁸ In addition Mr. Wilson sent Postmaster General Burleson, William F. McCombs, chairman of the national committee, and Dudley Field Malone on a speaking tour through Illinois for the purpose of aiding the campaign.¹⁹

Certain interests, among whom the Roman Catholic Church and the organizations favoring a return to the days of liberal liquor laws stand out, staunchly supported Mr. Sullivan's candidacy. The Harrisons, Governor Dunne, and William Jennings Bryan lost no opportunity of striking at it. The labor unions refused to remove Mr. Sullivan's name from the "unfair list" by a vote of 256 to 62, while the National Popular Government League sent Senator R. L. Owen of Oklahoma on a speaking tour over Illinois to oppose his election.²⁰ The National Popular Government

¹⁶ Mr. Sullivan triumphed at the primaries by approximately 30,000 votes.

¹⁷ For a statement of Mr. Sullivan's platform, see the *Chicago Tribune*, September 19, 1914, 4:1.

¹⁸ Joseph P. Tumulty, *Woodrow Wilson As I Know Him*, p. 102.

¹⁹ For reports of their labors, see the *Chicago Tribune*, October 24, 1914, 5:5; October 28, 1914, 7:2; and October 30, 1914, 7:4.

²⁰ *Chicago Tribune*, October 5, 1914, 10:4.

League asserted that it based its enmity on the grounds that "Sullivan was an enemy of good government . . . and a boss."²¹

Ultimately Roger Sullivan lost the election to Mr. Sherman, the Republican candidate, by almost sixteen thousand votes. Nevertheless, he rolled up a plurality of approximately fifty-six thousand votes in Cook County.²² He felt somewhat bitter over the defeat and issued a statement to the effect that "it is regrettable that we have people so minded as to penalize a man for the religion he got from his mother, and that we have men willing to capitalize this baseness for the sake of getting office."²³ However, he maintained his interest in politics, served as a member of the state council of defense during the war, and in the ensuing years built up a stronger dominance than ever before.

In 1885 Mr. Sullivan married Helen M. Quinlan of Chicago. Five children came into their home, one son, Boetius H., and four daughters. Mr. Boetius Sullivan graduated from Andover Academy, then attended Yale, and finally joined the law firm of Cooke, Sullivan, and Ricks of Chicago. Chairman McCombs of the Democratic national committee characterizes him as "a clean, well-cut, well-balanced young man."²⁴ His interest in progressive politics and the science of government seems to have had much to do with his father's swing to Wilson in 1912.

Physically Mr. Sullivan was large, averaging around one hundred and eighty-seven pounds in weight and standing five feet ten and one half inches in height.²⁵ William F. McCombs has described him as "big brained, big fisted, and shaggy armed."²⁶ He seems to have possessed a very prac-

²¹ *Chicago Tribune*, October 11, 1914, 9:4.

²² *Chicago Tribune*, November 6, 1914, 1:2.

²³ *Chicago Tribune*, November 8, 1914, 1:2.

²⁴ *Chicago Tribune*, October 30, 1914, 7:4.

²⁵ Information available through the courtesy of Mr. Boetius Sullivan.

²⁶ *Chicago Tribune*, October 30, 1914, 7:4.

tical outlook, an abundance of sound common sense, and sufficient human interest to make him big-hearted. His bitterest opponent, William Jennings Bryan, went so far as to designate him "an able man, a clever man, and personally a genial fellow."²⁷

Though he was tremendously energetic in political or business affairs, Mr. Sullivan hesitated long before making an open attack. One of his boasts in the senatorial campaign was that he refused to deal in personalities at a time when his rivals devoted most of their attention to it.²⁸ Few ever seriously accused Sullivan of being a hard master, for both friend and foe admitted his benevolence and only differed in attaching "boss" to the "benevolent." Mr. Sullivan himself always held that "no one who has ever dealt with me has called me boss. . . . Every party has leaders. I have been one of many leaders in Chicago and Illinois off and on for the last twenty years."²⁹

Besides holding committee assignments in local, state, and national political bodies, Mr. Sullivan spoke frequently at public meetings and displayed a generous attitude toward newspaper men. Therefore, he can scarcely be designated a silent boss or a boss who preferred to work behind the scenes rather than in the open. Ordinarily he feared anything in the way of innovation in politics with an almost "childish conservatism."³⁰ The initiative and referendum, for example, seemed especially dangerous to him. Nevertheless, on occasion he broke away from the "old guard" almost completely and threw his strength without reserve for strictly progressive measures. A statement made in 1913 throws light on perhaps his most distinctive political characteristic. Mr. Sullivan said, "In my own judgment the public

²⁷ *Chicago Tribune*, September 5, 1906, 3:1-2.

²⁸ *Chicago Tribune*, October 28, 1914, 1:1, and November 8, 1914, 1:2.

²⁹ *Chicago Tribune*, November 22, 1914, 17:1.

³⁰ *Chicago Tribune*, October 27, 1914, p. 8.

official of this country has got to get away from one modern custom very prevalent among public officials today—the spirit of hypocrisy. That is the greatest curse we've got in the United States—public officials pretending to be something which they are not and misinforming the rank and file of the people by some misstatement they make.”³¹

Starting as a farm hand at a very low wage, Roger Sullivan built up a fortune unusually large for a political leader. As secretary and later as president of the Ogden Gas Company and as the moving spirit of the Sawyer Biscuit Company he seems to have laid a good financial foundation. It has been said that his estate, which was appraised at \$1,503,607, would have been larger, except for large gifts made to his children during his life time.³² Among the interests revealed at the appraisal of the estate were Ogden Gas bonds to the extent of \$257,000, \$255,204 in Union Carbide stock, 1,000 shares of Armour Leather stock, 3,454 shares of Sawyer Biscuit stock, and 375 shares of *Chicago Record-Herald* stock. The estate also included 150,000 shares of Golconda Gold Mines stock and 1,000 shares of Golden Desert Mining stock which had no appreciable value.³³ At one time or another Mr. Sullivan held the presidency of the the Great Lakes Dredging and Dock Company and directorships in several banks and business institutions.³⁴

Along in the middle of his career Roger Sullivan began the practice of spending about eighteen hundred dollars annually in assisting young men to secure an education. In his will he directed the executors to continue such a grant for twenty years.³⁵ It was eminently fitting, therefore, that the board of education of Chicago should name a school the

³¹ *New York Times*, August 30, 1913, 7:3.

³² See the *New York Times*, April 7, 1921, 11:1.

³³ *New York Times*, April 7, 1921, 11:1.

³⁴ Manuscript of B. J. Mullaney.

³⁵ *Chicago Tribune*, April 29, 1920, 13:1.

"Roger C. Sullivan Junior High School" in his memory.³⁶ All told Mr. Sullivan gave considerable largesses, some of which amounted to ten thousand dollars, for charitable purposes. His will provided for gifts of \$5,000 each to St. Vincent de Paul Society of Chicago and to St. Mary's Training School at Des Plaines.³⁷

As a club man Roger Sullivan belonged to the Union League, the Iroquois, the Chicago Athletic, and the South Shore Clubs. He remained throughout his life a faithful member of the Roman Catholic Church. In the funeral held at Holy Name Cathedral Bishop P. J. Muldoon, in delivering the sermon which followed the celebration of the mass, called to memory his driving the parish priest from Belvidere to Marengo every Sunday for mass.³⁸ Apparently Mr. Sullivan's associations with the clergy were pleasant, for on a four month's trip with John P. Hopkins through South America and Europe in 1913 he took along Fathers E. A. Kelly and J. F. Callahan.³⁹

For several months prior to his death on April 14, 1920, Mr. Sullivan suffered from illness; yet his death came unexpectedly. Confined to his home and often to his bed for these last months he received reports from subordinates, issued necessary orders, and maintained control over the Democracy of Chicago and Cook County until the very end.

³⁶ Manuscript of B. J. Mullaney was read at the dedication.

³⁷ *New York Times*, April 7, 1921, 11:1.

³⁸ *Chicago Tribune*, April 18, 1920, 1:1.

³⁹ For comments on the trip, see the *New York Times*, August 30, 1913, 7:3.

CHAPTER XVII

"COLONEL" EDWARD BUTLER

The famous New York City overlords have belonged to the Democratic party. In contrast Philadelphia bosses mainly own the Republican party. "Doc" Ames of Minneapolis once bossed as a Democrat and then turned Republican and dominated in that capacity. But Edward Butler, although nominally a Democrat, ruled St. Louis irrespective of which party won at the polls, for as he once replied when asked why he did not seek public office, "I always preferred to let the other fellow hold the office and then get acquainted with him."¹ Whether the "other fellow" happened to be a Democrat or a Republican, "Colonel" Butler generally managed to "get acquainted with him" and wielded great power in St. Louis politics in spite of election returns.

Above all Mr. Butler possessed a wealth of cognomens. Sometimes he went by the name of "Colonel," although he had no army connections. Again people called him "Ed." Some spoke of "Old Man" Butler, and still others of "Boss" Butler or the "Village Blacksmith." Born in Ireland somewhere in the vicinity of Dublin, Mr. Butler did not know the exact place or date of his birth, although he spoke of his birth-year as the "year of the big wind." In as much as there were two "big winds" in Ireland during the period—one in 1830 and another in 1838—it is difficult to determine the exact year to say nothing of the month and day. The "Colonel" always celebrated his birth on Christmas day.² In ancestry so humble that the family apparently resided in a wretched hut, Edward Butler enjoyed very meagre oppor-

¹ *American State Trials*, ed. John D. Lawson (St. Louis, 1918), IX, 493.

² See Mr. Butler's testimony in *American State Trials*, IX, 492. See also the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, September 12, 1911, 1:3, and the *St. Louis Star*, September 10, 1911, 1:6.

tunities, admitting that he had never attended school a day in his life, and emigrated alone to the United States when about eleven years of age unable to either read or write.³ For a time he served as apprentice to a blacksmith in New York City. In 1857 or perhaps a little earlier he arrived in St. Louis and lived there continuously until his death in 1911.⁴

During his early years in Missouri Mr. Butler worked for various blacksmiths, including John Mullery and Erastus Wells, father of Mayor Rollo Wells, first as bellows boy and later as horseshoer. In 1860 he married Ellen O'Neil and soon thereafter acquired a small shoeing shop of his own in the loft of which he lived. James J., the eldest son, was born in 1862 in this room over the shop. Altogether the Butlers had eight children and thirteen grandchildren, but several of the children died prematurely so that in 1911 at the "Colonel's" death only two remained alive.⁵ Business did not prosper until Mr. Butler perceived the possibilities of a patented horseshoe and managed to secure the exclusive western agency. Soon the horse car lines of St. Louis, realizing the advantages of the new shoe, gave Agent Butler the business of shoeing their horses. The business expanded rapidly until everyone knew the Butler slogan, "No Frog, No Foot; No Foot, No Horse."

Starting on the first rung of the political ladder, the "Colonel" climbed gradually from precinct influence to ward and finally city-wide power. During the sixties he created a limited following through small kindnesses to neighbors. When the contract for the horse car company made possible

³ *St. Louis Republic*, September 19, 1911, 1:3. See also *American State Trials*, IX, 520.

⁴ The *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, September 10, 1911, 1:5, declares that he arrived at the age of 15 years. But see *American State Trials*, IX, 520, for Butler's testimony.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 492. See also *St. Louis Republic*, September 10, 1911, 8:6.

several shops scattered over the city, he found means to greatly expand his following and early in the seventies became dominant in his own ward. By means of loans to those in need, bail to unfortunates in the clutches of the law aggregating millions of dollars at the Four Courts alone, and a dozen other favors, as well as by sheer physical force, he scrambled from the very bottom to the top in his ward.⁶ The climb to city-wide power obviously involved more than mere kindness and brute force, for in this sphere Mr. Butler competed with shrewd men. Nevertheless, he matched wits with his rivals and at the price of eternal vigilance, accompanied by real native ability to dominate men, left them behind.⁷

By 1876 the "Colonel" had reached considerably beyond his own ward. A new city charter of that year brought him opportunity and he undertook for a certain consideration to secure its rejection. Miscalculating, however, the strength of its supporters, he failed to muster sufficient voters to defeat its adoption.⁸ In spite of this fiasco he maintained his courage and finally succeeded in turning the failure into an asset by capturing the house of delegates created by the charter. St. Louis ordinarily elected Republican officials, and on the face of the returns Mr. Butler would have commanded lean patronage the greater part of the time. Nevertheless, he frequently strengthened himself most when opposition appeared the strongest. Thus in 1885 he supported C. C. Rainwater for mayor but after defeat made friends with David R. Franes, the successful candidate. Again in 1889 Mr. Butler failed to elect George W. Allen as mayor. However, the fact that E. A. Noonan, the winner, appointed James J. Butler city attorney indicates the relation between

⁶ See *St. Louis Republic*, September 10, 1911, 8:3. Also Claude Wetmore, *The Battle Against Bribery* (St. Louis, 1904), p. 14.

⁷ James L. Blair, "The St. Louis Disclosures," *Detroit Conference for Good City Government*, 1903 (Philadelphia, 1903), p. 91.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 90. See also *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, September 9, 1911, 2:2.

the "Colonel" and the city administration. In 1893 Mr. Butler nominated James Bannerman for mayor, but the Republicans won at the polls. Another case of defeat which turned out well involved Harry Hawes, now United States Senator. Mr. Butler fought his election as sheriff and then because Mr. Hawes proved to be a "good fighter" joined forces.⁹ To avenge the defeat of James J. Butler for state senator in 1896 the "Colonel" established a rival undertaking business. In 1897 he again lost the mayor at the polls but made up for the loss by a very profitable alliance with Henry Ziegenhagen, Republican mayor-elect.

The chief asset of Mr. Butler in taking over a normally Republican city took the form of a Democratic state with a legislature that derived more than a little pleasure from interfering in municipal affairs. In as much as the governor, ordinarily a Democrat, controlled the St. Louis police department and election machinery, "Colonel" Butler fared well in the face of a majority of Republican voters. Nevertheless, this asset, important as it may be, does not account entirely for his leadership, although it seems doubtful whether in the absence of such an aid to furnish a start he could have reached the place he finally attained. On the top of his power with police and election boards he erected an elaborate organization which he allowed to fall into decay toward the end of his career. In the first place he established himself in the graces of those desiring special privileges by judicially handling their business. Merchants needing sidewalk space in contravention of the law, saloons wishing to sell to minors or to keep open at forbidden hours, vice interests demanding blindness to their operations, all supported the "Colonel" because he saw to their wants.¹⁰ It is said that he was a "friend of most of the rich of St. Louis."¹¹

⁹ *St. Louis Star*, September 10, 1911, 5:1.

¹⁰ *American State Trials*, IX, xvii.

¹¹ *St. Louis Star*, September 10, 1911, 5:1.

With the election officials and police sympathetic Mr. Butler perfected an organization of plug uglies and repeaters known as "Butler's Indians," which could cast more votes than several thousand ordinary citizens. Indeed the committee on elections of the United States House of Representatives declared that in the November election of 1909 "it is reasonably certain that there were not less than 10,000 in the Twelfth Congressional District out of 27,478 registered who had no legal right to vote."¹² In the same year an examination of the ballots showed that sixty out of one hundred and thirteen election judges who were supposed to be Republican actually cast their ballots for the Democratic congressional candidate.¹³ Chief of Police Campbell testified that his department "contributed about \$20,000 toward the payment of the campaign for the benefit of the Democratic party" in the same election.¹⁴ Mr. Butler also founded the St. Louis Democratic Club.

It did not require any miracle, considering the fact that more than one half of the members of one of the houses of the St. Louis council and a large proportion of the members of the other house during Mr. Butler's time operated saloons, to enable him to supplement his power with a "reasonable and willing" city council.¹⁵ True, a majority of the councilmen happened to be Republicans, but party scarcely counts when business dictates otherwise. Mr. Butler "organized" several councils, the most notorious one dating from 1899. In that year he chose a leader from each house, Charles Kurtz from the upper and John K. Murrell from the lower, and placed Kurtz in command of six other councilmen and Murrell in charge of eighteen other assemblymen. These

¹² "William M. Horton v. James J. Butler," *House Report* 1423, 57 Cong., 1 sess., p. 11, 19.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹⁵ See Frank G. Tyrell, *Political Thuggery* (St. Louis, 1904), p. 120. Also see p. 8.

members represented a majority in both cases and hence passed what they chose through their respective bodies. Considering the fact that the members of both houses received the sum of twenty-five dollars per month for services rendered the city, it may not seem so strange that some of them felt little hesitancy in supplementing that amount with what "fees" they could collect from those desiring franchise and other privileges. The "Colonel" negotiated with the buyers, dickered on the "fee" per vote with the "combine," and then handled the finances involved, incidentally reserving a goodly percentage for himself.¹⁶

The entire Butler family attended state political conventions, and there can be no doubt that they exercised considerable influence in state politics, although Lincoln Steffens' designation of the "Colonel" as "maker and guide of the governors of Missouri" seems to be overdone.¹⁷ In 1896 the "Colonel" attended the state convention in spite of a preference to dominate from without the walls of a convention hall. In 1902 James J. served as state committeeman for the Twelfth District and member of the committee on resolutions in the state convention. In 1900 he held a place on the committee on credentials of the appellate court convention of the eastern district. John R. served on the committee on organization and order of business of the state judicial convention in 1902.¹⁸

"Old Man" Butler, with his towering six feet of height, broad shoulders, ample girth, sinewy arms, and immense strength, makes another member for the "order of big bosses." Shocky, uncombed hair, close-cropped whiskers and beard, great hands, rather homely but leonine features

¹⁶ James L. Blair, "The St. Louis Disclosures," *Proceedings of the Detroit Conference for Good City Government*, 1903, p. 89.

¹⁷ Lincoln Steffens, *The Shame of the Cities* (New York, 1904), p. 56.

¹⁸ See the *Official Manual of the State of Missouri, 1903-1904* (Jefferson City, Mo., 1904?), pp. 305, 316, 317, 333.

marked the man. In early days he dressed in red flannel underclothes and leathern apron, rolled his sleeves to the shoulders, and wore no hat. Later he substituted less picturesque clothes, wearing a bow tie, wide-brimmed, slouch hat, and nondescript suits and carrying a black thorn cane.¹⁹ Although splotches of discoloration marred his face, a winning smile and genial heart drew much personal affection especially from the unfortunates of the city who informed inquirers "he's the best man in the world."²⁰ By no means given to sullenness or even sternness and with a definite vein of sardonic humor, "Colonel" Butler yet kept his feelings under good control and seldom displayed them either in time of defeat or success. Although not a silent man in any sense of the term and the possessor of a "clear, strong voice," he rarely, if ever, spoke in public and then found it difficult to command even passable English.²¹ He seemed to be very fond of his home and his friends, being, like most humans, a loyal friend and a good hater of enemies. He gave very freely to individuals in needy circumstances but refused to contribute to organized charity.²² Native shrewdness made him a good judge of men as well as a success financially, but of all his characteristics ability to work incessantly, unusual skill in organization, and the keenness that enabled him to direct his efforts to the best advantage took first place in making for political achievement.

Not content with politics alone Mr. Butler took an active part in the business life of St. Louis. At one time five blacksmith and horseshoeing shops occupied a large portion of his time. Finally a son, Edward, Junior, largely relieved his father of the burden in this particular business. The St. Louis Sanitary Company, commonly known as "Butler's

¹⁹ See *St. Louis Republic*, September 19, 1911, 2:4.

²⁰ Claude Wetmore, *The Battle Against Bribery*, p. 13.

²¹ *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, February 4, 1904, 1:2.

²² *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, September 10, 1911, 2:6.

stink factory," which operated reduction plants for handling the city garbage, credited the "Old Man" with 185 shares of stock and paid him twenty-five hundred dollars per year for his services.²³ Together with his sons he owned the Excelsior Hauling Company which collected city garbage and carted it to the reduction plant. Then, too, he owned railroad, copper, trolley, bank, and public service stocks, dealt in real estate, and speculated in a "good deal of bonds and stocks."²⁴ In addition he owned the Century Theatre in Kansas City and the Standard Theatre in St. Louis as well as the Edwards Hotel in Kansas City and the Berlin Hotel in St. Louis. All of those who deal with his wealth estimate it in the millions.²⁵ As a matter of record he left at his death personal property to the amount of approximately \$400,000 and real estate valued at about \$400,000.²⁶

Nepotism played a leading role in Mr. Butler's political career, for although he refused to hold office himself, he placed several public positions at the disposal of his sons. James J. Butler, a graduate of St. Louis University with a B.S. degree, studied law at Washington University and began to practise in 1884 but preferred to read the classics. He served for eight years as city attorney of St. Louis, two years as school director, and was twice elected to Congress.²⁷ John R. Butler led the Twenty-second Ward Democracy, represented it on the city central committee, and held the office of vice-chairman of that committee.²⁸ Edward Butler,

²³ *American State Trials*, IX, 492-493.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 492, 493, 494, 521, 522.

²⁵ See the *St. Louis Times*, *Globe-Democrat*, *Star*, and *Republic* for three to seven million dollar estimates. See also Lincoln Steffens, *The Shame of Cities*, p. 117, and Claude Wetmore, *The Battle Against Bribery*, p. 13.

²⁶ The author is indebted to Mr. J. W. White, of the Mercantile Trust Company of St. Louis, executor and trustee of the estate, for this information. The real estate now exceeds the million mark.

²⁷ *Congressional Directory*, 58 Cong., Special sess., p. 64.

²⁸ *Official Manual of the State of Missouri, 1903-1904*, p. 313.

Junior, ruled the Twenty-fifth Ward, looked after its interests on the city central committee, and helped his father in business.²⁹ All the boys aided in the management of the repeaters and plug uglies on election day.

Nominally a member of the Roman Catholic Church, the "Old Man" received denunciation from Catholic priest and Protestant clergyman alike. Father James Coffey of St. John's Church, Mr. Butler's greatest adversary, went so far as to brand him from the pulpit "a corrupter of youth," while many ministers of all churches delivered special sermons on his iniquities.³⁰ Frank Tyrell, pastor of Mount Cabanne Christian Church, wrote a book about the "Colonel" and his misdeeds and the St. Louis Ministerial Alliance issued a stinging statement.³¹ Nevertheless, W. W. Boyd, minister of the Second Baptist Church, said in the course of a public address, "Had Edward Butler's early life been different, he would have become a second Abraham Lincoln."³² Later in life Mr. Butler turned somewhat more to religion, and Henry C. Bronsgeest, his priest, reported that "he took the sacrament regularly and was a devout Catholic." "One of his characteristics was a strong, simple faith in God and hereafter."³³ The press of St. Louis stood almost united against the "Colonel" and played some part in his downfall. At first he scoffed at their attacks but later became quite sensitive and finally bitter at their attitude. He commanded the affection of the poorer classes because of generosity and the support of certain business interests because he handled their wants satisfactorily. Otherwise he received little good will.

²⁹ *Official Manual of the State of Missouri, 1903-1904*, p. 313.

³⁰ Lincoln Steffens, *The Shame of the Cities*, p. 106.

³¹ Frank G. Tyrell, *Political Thuggery*. The statement of the Alliance is printed in this book on pages 119-121.

³² Claude Wetmore, *The Battle Against Bribery*, p. 13.

³³ *St. Louis Times*, September 12, 1911, 1:3.

Mr. Butler was a tireless worker, as is well indicated by his personal statements that he had "no amusements," "never attended a ball game in my life," "all the amusement I ever enjoyed was in working hard and making money,"³⁴ "the way to get a nomination is to hustle like H—."³⁵ However, he was not a very harsh master. He ruled his forces by the favors he dispensed rather than standing whip in hand as a Simon Legree over the backs of minions. As it was, he prided himself on being "no cheap man," and if seekers of favor desired to negotiate directly with the council rather than pay his price, he apparently did not greatly care.³⁶ Nor can he be designated a "modest boss." His "I've been stealing elections in St. Louis for thirty years" smacks of the dare-devil.³⁷

For the ten years, 1892-1902, Mr. Butler stood at the height of his career. When the notorious Republican mayor by the name of Ziegenhagen administered city affairs, the "Colonel" controlled quite as absolutely as he did at other times when Democrats held the offices. When the "Old Man" held up the city lighting contract because the company refused to pay his "fee" of \$175,000 and St. Louis had no lights for weeks, Mayor Ziegenhagen is said to have defended him before irate citizens thus, "You got the moon, ain't you?"³⁸

All things favored the rule of Mr. Butler until the city council cast off all restraint and set out on a rampage to make money. There had been several deals involving bribes prior to 1900 and no trouble had ensued. In 1898, for example, the council had turned against the "Colonel" when Robert M. Snyder considered his "fee" too high. Mr. Snyder sued

³⁴ *St. Louis Times*, September 11, 1911, 2:3.

³⁵ Frank G. Tyrell, *Political Thuggery*, p. 44.

³⁶ *American State Trials*, IX, 494.

³⁷ *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, September 10, 1911, 2:2.

³⁸ See Lincoln Steffens, *The Shame of the Cities*, p. 111.

for a franchise permitting him to parallel any street car track in the city and before finally receiving it paid about a quarter of a million dollars in bribes to the councilmen.³⁹ Although Snyder turned around and sold the franchise for a million and a quarter dollars, Mr. Butler apparently felt avenged in as much as he had had to pay more than his original price.

Finally in 1900 the St. Louis and Suburban Railway Company asked for an extension of its franchise. The "fee" named by the "Old Man" seemed high, and, therefore, President Charles H. Turner employed Philip Stock, prominently identified with the brewing trade, to bargain directly with the council. Bribes amounting to seventy-five thousand dollars for the lower house and sixty thousand dollars for the upper house were agreed upon, and the money deposited in safety deposit boxes in two St. Louis banks with the understanding that the boxes might be opened only by Stock and representatives from the council when the franchise had been passed. The council passed the extension without delay. However, certain citizens, objecting to the proposed route, secured an injunction which kept the franchise extension from taking effect. Before the matter could be ironed out, the terms of the members of the lower house expired, and they demanded their money on the ground that they had fulfilled their part of the agreement. The Suburban Company refused to pay, claiming that they had received no benefit. The struggle over the matter became so intense that the facts leaked out and finally found their way into a newspaper.⁴⁰

In 1900 Mr. Joseph W. Folk had been elected circuit attorney of St. Louis on a ticket generally approved by the "Old Man." When the account of the Suburban quarrel

³⁹ See *American State Trials*, IX, xvii, xviii, 453, for an account of this case.

⁴⁰ See *ibid.*, 337, x, xiv, and also James L. Blair, "The St. Louis Disclosures," *Proceedings of the Detroit Conference for Good City Government*, 1903, pp. 91, 92. The injunction was issued in *James M. Carpenter et al v. Edmund Bearsch et al.*

appeared in the newspapers, he read it, and shortly thereafter summoned several ex-councilmen before a grand jury. They treated the summons as a huge joke, and one and all replied, "We don't know nawthin'," when questioned by the jury.⁴¹ Then Mr. Folk called President Turner of the Suburban Company and Philip Stock, the agent, and, having intimated that he knew everything, gave them the choice of turning state's evidence or going to prison. They fell before the bluff and before the forty-eight hour ultimatum had expired appeared before the grand jury to make complete confessions. Mr. Folk in the meantime had scared the Lincoln Trust Company and Mississippi Valley Trust Company into opening the safety deposit boxes and used the \$135,000 in currency, found therein, as evidence in indicting twenty-one councilmen and sending nine to the penitentiary.⁴²

Evidence produced in the several trials growing out of the Suburban deal implicated "Old Man" Butler rather deeply, and the grand jury proceeded to indict him. Instead of running away as most of the culprits had attempted to do, the "Colonel" went on the bonds of the councilmen to the extent of one hundred and fifty thousand dollars and when the indictment against himself appeared imminent voluntarily visited the sheriff's office on several occasions to surrender and give bail. The first indictment, charging that Mr. Butler had offered a bribe of twenty-five hundred dollars to one Doctor Henry N. Chapman, a member of the board of health, in return for his vote to award the garbage contract to the St. Louis Sanitary Company, came to trial in the year 1902. The "Old Man" alleged that public opinion would not allow a fair trial in St. Louis and received a change of venue to Columbia. Together with his wife and

⁴¹ *American State Trials*, IX, x.

⁴² For accounts of this coup, see *ibid.*, IX, x, xi, xii, xiv, xv.

sons he went up to Columbia to stand trial.⁴³ It is reported that after his first walk about the city he asked what the business of the place might be and when the answer came, "Education," replied, "Education! well that's a hell of a business."⁴⁴

At the convening of the trial court Mr. Butler asked a postponement in order that he might return to St. Louis to elect his son, James J., to Congress. The second committee of the United States House of Representatives on elections later reported in regard to the methods employed in this election, "higher evidence of fraud it would be difficult to imagine."⁴⁵ Among other things it discovered that of one hundred and ten men registered from the Butler stables only two could be located, that in a precinct in Ward Twenty-three out of three hundred and eighty-eight ballots cast ninety-five were cast by persons not registered at all, that of the same ballots fifty-eight were cast by twenty-nine persons on the same name and number, that the ballots of fifty-four persons who according to poll books had appeared and voted were missing, and that ninety-four ballots were not entered in the poll books at all.⁴⁶ The committee recommended that 9,239 votes counted for Butler be thrown out and he be declared not elected.⁴⁷

Although counsel attempted to silence him, "Colonel" Butler insisted on answering all questions and indicated his complacency during the trial by vigorously chewing gum. When Attorney Folk inquired whether his general business was bribery, he replied, "I have done just as any other man

⁴³ See the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, October 14, 15, and 16, 1902, for daily reports.

⁴⁴ Claude Wetmore, *The Battle Against Bribery*, p. 115.

⁴⁵ "George C. R. Wagoner v. James J. Butler," *House of Representatives Report* 3857, 57 Cong., 2 sess., p. 6.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 12, 24.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

would do to try to take care of his money."⁴⁸ The jury finally returned an unanimous verdict of "guilty" on the second ballot, and the court imposed a sentence of three years in the penitentiary. However, the supreme court of Missouri, declaring that the board of health had no authority to award a garbage contract and hence that money offered a member could not be construed as bribery, reversed the lower court and freed the defendant.⁴⁹

A second indictment, charging Mr. Butler with purchasing votes in connection with the city lighting contract of 1899, resulted from confessions of disgruntled ex-councilmen who could not secure bail and had to remain in jail fifty-one days. They said that the "Old Man" had paid \$47,500 to the combine in the lower chamber for the passage of the contract.⁵⁰ This indictment came to trial at Fulton in Callaway County in February, 1904, after the Missouri supreme court had reversed the first decision. The prosecution attempted to show that the defendant had appeared on the floor of the house of delegates in connection with the lighting bill. However, the jury, beginning with a ten to two vote for acquittal, soon returned an unanimous verdict of "not guilty."⁵¹

In spite of the trials the "Colonel" continued to dominate St. Louis to a considerable extent. In October, 1902, he easily controlled the city convention and in 1904 secured the election of followers to the house of delegates. Indeed his favorite henchman was elected speaker. After the election of November, 1902, the press commented editorially, "The

⁴⁸ Claude Wetmore, *The Battle Against Bribery*, pp. 120-121.

⁴⁹ See 178 *Missouri Reports*, 272. For accounts of this trial see *St. Louis Globe Democrat*, November 10, 1902, 1:2; Nov. 11, 1:4; Nov. 12, 1:6; Nov. 13, 1:7; Nov. 14, 1:6; Nov. 15, 1:6.

⁵⁰ Claude Wetmore, *The Battle Against Bribery*, pp. 123-124.

⁵¹ For accounts of this trial, see *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, February 2, 1904, 1:2; Feb. 3, 1:2; Feb. 4, 1:2; Feb. 5, 1:2; Feb. 6, 1:6; Feb. 7, 1:3-5.

election of 1902 shows Ed. Butler to be by long odds the most powerful politician in the State." "He makes governors and Congressmen, and directs legislatures and municipal assemblies." "He is Missouri, politically speaking."⁵² Nevertheless, the two trials greatly weakened the personal strength of the "Village Blacksmith," as Mr. Butler was now sometimes called. And from 1906 until his death from paralysis on September 9, 1911, his lot was quite often that of the invalid. He became somewhat pessimistic and finally bitter during this period because old friends tended to forget him. So great, however, remained his determination that in August, 1908, he roused himself from his bed, fought actively in the primaries, and won a final primary victory in a political career of more than thirty years.⁵³

⁵² *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, November 6, 1902, 8:3.

⁵³ *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, September 10, 1911, 2:5.



MARTIN BEHRMAN

CHAPTER XVIII

MARTIN BEHRMAN

A considerable number of cities south of the Mason and Dixon line have domiciled political bosses off and on. Atlanta, Louisville, Memphis, Nashville, New Orleans, Galveston, and El Paso have each at some time or other been graced by the presence of barons of more or less distinction. On the whole southern overlords seem to be less cosmopolitan in interests and in fame than their compeers elsewhere in the United States. With the exception of Martin Behrman of New Orleans none of them seem to rank alongside of the Tammany Hall bosses, the Chicago barons, or even the Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, or San Francisco political worthies as household celebrities throughout the land.

Martin Behrman, born in New York City on October 14, 1864, arrived in New Orleans at the age of seven months and sojourned there until his death in 1926. His father, Henry Behrman, a German Jew, followed the trade of cigar making and died while his son was still an infant, leaving his wife to provide a living for herself and baby.¹ This, Fredericka Behrman succeeded in doing by keeping a dry goods and notions booth in the bazaar at the French market. In spite of her financial difficulties she insisted that Martin secure an education and sent him to the German-American School and later to Saint Phillip's public school. Unlike other lads who later became political bosses, Martin did very well in school. He seems to have excelled especially in languages and at the age of ten years aided foreign-speaking children in acquiring a knowledge of English. The death of

¹The most satisfactory source of information relating to Mr. Behrman's early life is a series of autobiographical articles appearing in the *New Orleans Item* during 1922-1923 entitled "Story of His Life." See especially October 22, 1922, p. 1.

Mrs. Behrman, when Martin was but twelve years old, terminated regular attendance at school.²

At his mother's death Martin found himself without a single known relative. He soon disposed of the bazaar booth and found a job at fifteen dollars a month as cashier in Samuel's Dollar Store. So great was his ambition to achieve an education that he enrolled in night classes two evenings a week. At the age of fourteen he changed employment and went to work for Michael Gallagher of Algiers as clerk in a combined grocery and saloon. Sometime later he switched again and attached himself to John Lawton who ran a general store of considerable proportions which sold to planters from up and down the river. This job proved more satisfactory than the earlier two. Behrman continued in it until at the age of twenty-two or thereabouts he became a partner of Peter Lawton, son of his employer, in a retail grocery. During this period he helped take the census, held the presidency of the Algiers Democrat Company which published a struggling newspaper, read numerous newspapers and magazines, attended prize fights, and bought fractional lottery tickets every month.³ Not long after the venture with young Lawton, Behrman decided to try wholesale produce selling for Wallace and Van Horn. Until his first political job in 1888 he made a living as a traveling salesman first for Wallace and Van Horn, then for Trepagnier and Brothers, and finally for C. Doyle and Company.

In the year 1886 Mr. Behrman met Miss Julia Collins of Cincinnati, Ohio, who happened to be a guest at the home of his employer, John Lawton. They were married the next year. Miss Collins belonged to a family of some size and distinction. Two nephews, Major James L. Collins and Cap-

² See *New Orleans States*, January 12, 1926; *Times-Picayune*, January 13, 1926; and *New Orleans Item*, October 22, 1922, p. 1.

³ "Story of His Life, by Martin Behrman," *New Orleans Item*, October 23, 1922, pp. 1, 2; October 25, 1922, p. 7; and October 26, 1922, p. 4.

tain Joseph Collins, served respectively as aide to General Pershing and instructor at West Point. Although the Behrmans had eleven children all told, only two survived infancy. A daughter, Helen May, married Nathaniel W. Bond. A son, William Stanley, served as a captain with the A. E. F. in France and is president of a paving company in New Orleans.⁴ The Behrmans lived in a very modest shuttered cottage set off by palms over in Algiers. When asked why he did not move into a more impressive dwelling than one to be found in the Fifteenth Ward, he said, "They are my people. I am of them."⁵ The mayor was "in every sense a domestic man."

Except for approximately four years Mr. Behrman devoted the whole of his life from 1888 until his death to politics. Indeed a newspaper stated as early as 1904 that he had "always been in politics."⁶ At an early age Martin Behrman had become active in the Algiers volunteer fire organization and for a time served as its treasurer. Fire associations led to political interest. In 1888 he held the post of secretary in the Algiers Democratic committee, aided Francis T. Nichols in his race for governor, and after the election received a reward in the form of an appointment as deputy assessor of the Fifth District at a salary of \$150 per month. This place he held for four years until a new election placed his enemies in power. Then with "no employment . . . in debt, and a family to support" Behrman accepted a place as solicitor from the Edison Electric Light Company.⁷ During this slack time Behrman also helped bridge the gap by serving as clerk of three council com-

⁴ The author is greatly indebted to Mr. W. S. Behrman who placed at his disposal twenty-nine large scrap books kept by his father, made it possible to view public works sponsored by Mayor Behrman, and introduced him to numerous friends and appointees of the late mayor.

⁵ *New Orleans States*, January 12, 1926, p. 4.

⁶ *New Orleans Times-Democrat*, September 22, 1904, p. 4.

⁷ *Ibid.*, October 26, 1904, p. 8.

mittees and as Algiers member of the Orleans parish school board. In 1896 he encountered the first of his two political defeats when he failed to win a seat in the Louisiana house of representatives. The tide turned in 1897 and placed Behrman's friends in power again. Behrman received appointment as assessor of the Fifth District. It was at this period in his career that he established himself as the indisputable leader of the Fifteenth Ward and seized a seat on the executive committee of the Choctaw Club, the Democratic machine of New Orleans.

At the Louisiana Constitutional Convention of 1898 Martin Behrman represented Algiers and distinguished himself by the valiant fight waged to secure financial independence for public schools. He also sought compensation for owners of property taken for levee purposes and fought a proposed prohibition of railroad passes for public officials. Behrman later designated this convention as the "most important political business in which I ever had a hand" and admitted that his opposition to the railroad pass prohibition was a mistake.⁸

All through the nineties Martin Behrman quietly but effectively laid the foundations for his later remarkable political career. He joined many organizations of one kind or another and made numerous valuable contacts. One example of such strategy will suffice here. The business men organized a Progressive Union, a sort of chamber of commerce. Behrman became a charter member, served on several committees, and made many friends among business men. This sort of political or semi-political activity quite naturally bore fruit. The city and state leaders, including S. D. McEnery, M. J. Foster, and Francis T. Nichols, noticed him as a rising star. In 1904 Colonel C. C. Bird of

⁸ "Story of His Life, by Martin Behrman," *New Orleans Item*, November 6, 1922, p. 4, and November 8, 1922, p. 4.

Baton Rouge suggested him as the "regular" candidate for state auditor, a position which paid the attractive salary for those days of \$4,700 per annum. Behrman accepted the suggestion with alacrity, carried on a vigorous campaign, and won election. The press admitted that he "administered the affairs of the office of auditor successfully," but his discovery of a shortage of funds made him the "man of the hour."⁹

The Choctaw Club in 1904 offered the mayoralty nomination of New Orleans to Charles Janvier. Upon his declination it informed Auditor Behrman that it would support him as "one of our beloved citizens: one who is known by every man, woman, and child in the district in which he lives," "a man who has sprung from the people."¹⁰ In accepting Mr. Behrman said, "I am not a public speaker. . . . To the working men of this city, I say that if you want to know who Martin Behrman is, ask the men in the shops on the other side of the river. If you want to know my business abilities, ask the merchants on Poydras Street, with whom I worked for several years."¹¹

The campaign promised to be mild enough until Governor N. C. Blanchard interfered in the local situation by demanding that Judge Porter Parker be nominated for district attorney in the place of C. C. Luzenberg, the incumbent.¹² This action caused much bitterness and inspired the organization of an independent "Home Rule" party with a separate ticket headed by Charles F. Buck. Mr. Buck, a man of more than average education who was well known for his interest in civic affairs, commanded strong newspaper support as well as the united backing of the brewers. The

⁹ *Baton Rouge Times*, August 25, 1904.

¹⁰ *New Orleans Times-Democrat*, September 22, 1904, p. 3.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *New Orleans Item*, September 20, 1904, and *Daily News*, September 20, 1904.

"Home Rulers" turned muck-rakers and charged Behrman with receiving \$100 per month from the Edison Electric Company while state tax assessor and pointed out that the personal property assessment of the company had decreased from \$197,250 and \$202,750 in 1896 and 1897 to \$98,700 and \$100,000 in 1898 and 1899.¹³ Behrman replied that he had been employed by the Edison Company but that he had resigned before he took an active part in assessing the property of the company. He stated that prior to 1901 he had assessed only the Fifth District in which the electric company had no property. He also frankly admitted that the "Home Rule" charge that he had accepted free railway passes in violation of the state constitution was true.¹⁴ Mr. Buck characterized Behrman as "lacking in every quality which (is) necessary to make a mayor of this great city."¹⁵ Shortly after Mr. Buck's charge relating to the decrease in Edison Company assessments, Auditor Behrman disputed his figures and claimed that the assessment had actually increased over the period 1896-1899.¹⁶ Sturges Adams, a Behrmanite, hit at Buck when he said, "I would rather be a flea-bitten dog and bay the moon than such a reformer."¹⁷ On the very eve of the election the "Home Rulers" blared out that the voters' lists had been padded and cited five registered at the home of a single lady, four at a vacant residence formerly occupied by a priest, and three from a vacant lot.¹⁸ Altogether the outcome seemed likely to be quite against the "Regulars." However, the returns indicated that 13,962 votes had been cast for Behrman and 10,047 votes for Buck.¹⁹

¹³ *New Orleans Times-Democrat*, October 26, 1904, pp. 1, 7, 8.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, October 27, 1904, p. 9.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, October 31, 1904, p. 7.

¹⁹ *Charter of the City of New Orleans and List of Executive Officers* (New Orleans, 1908), p. 28.

One of Mr. Behrman's strong assets in the above contest was the support of the labor forces. The Democratic Labor League resolved, "We recognize in Martin Behrman a man arisen from the ranks of labor, of large public experience, and acknowledged integrity."²⁰

After inauguration ceremonies in which Mr. Behrman stressed economy, clean streets, vigilant sanitation, and law and order, the new mayor got to work at once and by the admission of his enemies labored most industriously for New Orleans. He invariably arrived at his office by 9 A. M. and remained until late in the afternoon. One of his first tasks involved the police department, which at the time served as a sort of political fortress for one Dominick C. O'Malley, who had started out as a private detective but at the time occupied himself as owner of the *New Orleans Item*. The mayor caused O'Malley to be arrested again and again to show that he had no police influence and finally sent him to prison for five months.²¹ Somewhat later he stated that he believed in "a fire department as far removed from politics as possible" and made an attempt to remove the New Orleans fire department from the inner circle of politics.²²

In contrast to the fierce struggle of 1904 Mr. Behrman encountered very little opposition when he entered the lists again in 1908 as a candidate for mayor. The newspapers displayed slight interest and the campaign lagged along. Behrman finally met with no opposition on the ballot and received 26,897 votes as against 270 polled by a Socialist and 89 by an Independent.²³

²⁰ *New Orleans Times-Democrat*, October 12, 1904, p. 7.

²¹ For an extended account of this struggle, see "Story of His Life, by Martin Behrman," *New Orleans Item*, November 23, 24, 25, 26, and 27, 1922.

²² *Times-Picayune*, May 2, 1925, p. 1.

²³ See the *New Orleans Times-Democrat*, November 3, 1908, p. 7; November 4, 1908, p. 1; and November 7, 1908, p. 5.

The Good Government League of New Orleans used the mayor-council government of the city to explain the control of Mayor Behrman. It believed and persuaded others to believe that with the commission form Mr. Behrman would find sledding difficult. With that idea in mind the League threw itself wholeheartedly into a fight for a commission charter for New Orleans. It drew up and presented to the state legislature a bill which required some thirteen amendments to the state constitution. But Behrman was not inactive. Indeed, he too framed a charter bill of more simple dimensions which provided a modified commission form of government for New Orleans. Curiously enough the legislature enacted his bill rather than that of the League. In the ensuing election Martin Behrman announced his candidacy for commission mayor and pointed to eighty-five public school buildings, seventy-four miles of pavement, sixteen fire houses, nine night schools, and a municipally owned Belt Line Railway as his contributions to New Orleans.²⁴ The League ran Judge Charles F. Claiborne. Mayor Behrman wound up his campaign by saying, "The time for talk is over. . . . I leave the case in your hands, having submitted it to the greatest jury known—the electorate of New Orleans."²⁵ Much to the consternation of the League this "jury" rendered a verdict of 23,365 in favor of Behrman and 13,994 for Claiborne.²⁶ The vindicated defendant jubilantly announced, "The result of the election is extremely gratifying. By the overwhelming majority which the regular organization has polled, the true Democrats of our city have shown that they will not allow themselves to be influenced by a campaign of villification and abuse such as has been waged by the Good Government League."²⁷

²⁴ See the *Daily States*, September 20, 1912, and September 25, 1912, and the *Picayune*, September 26, 1912.

²⁵ *New Orleans Times-Democrat*, October 1, 1912, p. 5.

²⁶ *New Orleans Times-Democrat*, October 2, 1912, p. 1.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

Despite the diagnosis of the Good Government League that the commission form of government would cure New Orleans of Behrmanism, the mayor entrenched himself more securely than ever and soon became a real baron. His power even overflowed the confines of the city and extended widespread over the state. So great soared his prestige that the election of 1916 practically went to him by default. In the state election he supported Colonel R. G. Pleasant and until the split in 1919 was recognized as the Democracy of New Orleans.

During Mr. Behrman's fourth administration as mayor the World War presented many difficult problems. The mayor devoted much of his time to war work but caused considerable criticism when he requested the war department to leave the segregated vice district undisturbed. His position was that segregation, despite its drawbacks, seemed the best practical solution. However, when the war department decided adversely, the mayor pushed through an ordinance that did away with the segregated area. His stand on this question, together with a bitter quarrel with the governor, were to have an effect on the election of 1920. To cap the series of misfortunes Mr. Behrman himself succumbed to a long illness and for some months found it necessary to absent himself from New Orleans.

As the 1920 municipal election drew near, prospects for the "Regulars" seemed somewhat slim. Behrman suggested that he yield the leading place to another, but a strong enough contender could not or at least was not found. The campaign again centered on personalities. Much emphasis was placed on an increase in street car fare during the Behrman administration and especially on a financial statement indicating a deficit in the city treasury. Although as a matter of fact this statement proved to be without foundation, the Behrmanites commanded not a single newspaper and hence found them-

selves helpless to combat it.²⁸ A. J. McShane, the opposition candidate, asked for fair play, arguing that four terms as mayor were enough for anybody. Colonel Ewing, dominant in certain political quarters, who had supported Behrman previously, threw his forces for McShane. Many were surprised that Behrman polled within twelve hundred and fifty votes of winning.²⁹

The misfortune of 1920 did not paralyze Martin Behrman but sent him to labor at reconstructing his machine. In 1921 he won election to the state constitutional convention and occupied a place of more than ordinary importance. He served on committees charged with housing, rules and procedure, public education, taxation, equalization and exemption, affairs of the city of New Orleans, and municipal and parochial corporations and affairs.³⁰ In contrast to his usual policy of activity he introduced only one ordinance and two resolutions. The ordinance looked to the nomination of state officers by parish rather than by popular vote and was not included in the final draft.³¹ The resolutions called for moving the United States Marine Hospital from the Mississippi levee where it interfered with the Port and Belt Railway and for a constitution of fundamental principles rather than legislative details.³² Both resolutions passed, the second in an amended form. Mr. Behrman also fought for racial purity, hard-surfaced roads, a larger legislature, and popular ratification of the constitution.³³

In 1922 Behrman elected two judges. In the gubernatorial election of 1923-24 he played his last card on Gov-

²⁸ See the *New Orleans Item*, August 18, 1920.

²⁹ *Times-Picayune*, October 31, 1920, p. 13.

³⁰ *Official Journal of the Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention of the State of Louisiana, 1921* (place of publication and date not given), pp. 20, 90, 92, 209, 640.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 365.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 15.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 600, 632, 650, 1016.

ernor Harry Fuqua and rode to victory by the narrow margin of approximately a thousand votes. The election of Fuqua brought patronage, and what is perhaps even more important, it changed the atmosphere by restoring the aura of success. In 1924 he received 517 votes to his opponents' combined 256, chose fourteen of the seventeen New Orleans members, and was elected chairman of the state central committee.³⁴ During this four year interval Mr. Behrman also went into business and occupied a position as vice-president of Stearns Foundry and later as active vice-president of the American Bank and Trust Company.

By the time 1924 drew near Mr. Behrman found himself with an increasing eagerness to occupy the chair of mayor again. Making a really brilliant campaign on his past record of service to New Orleans and on a great program of public improvements, he achieved the remarkable feat of winning a fifth election after most observers had considered him shelved politically.

Behrman's fifth and final term as mayor climaxed rather than anti-climaxed his long political career. Old opponents forgot for a time their enmity, all the newspapers turned about and gave him their backing, and in short he became the outstanding figure in New Orleans. The *Times-Picayune*, his almost consistent enemy, wrote, "Of his purpose to govern well and lead wisely we have no doubt. Of his sincere devotion to the well-being of his community there is no question." He has "great, if ill-balanced capacities" and is "above the average of his faction mates like peaks in a desert."³⁵ In a simple but impressive ceremony Mr. Behrman announced his program of extensive paving, parks, garbage disposal; an auditorium, and suppression of crime.³⁶

³⁴ *Times-Picayune*, January 18, 1924.

³⁵ May 4, 1925, p. 8.

³⁶ The author is indebted to Mr. W. S. Behrman for a manuscript copy of this inaugural address.

All these improvements were to be without increase in the tax rate. Although his death allowed scarcely more than six months for the carrying out of the ambitious program, the mayor made considerable progress. He could point to new public schools, playgrounds for children, an improved drainage and water system, the extension of zoning, a plan involving a twenty-seven million dollar development for five and a half miles along the shores of Lake Pontchartrain, the enlargement of the city park by 1,055 acres, a vast paving program, and plans for a municipal auditorium and new criminal court building.

Since Mr. Behrman's death these plans have been retained. Much has been done on the Lake Pontchartrain project in spite of the failure of a bond issue. This five and a half mile development, when completed, will add greatly to the assets of New Orleans. The auditorium and criminal court building have got to the stage where sites have been selected.³⁷ In appreciating the accomplishments cited above, one must not overlook the difficult financial situation in New Orleans where a very considerable part of the municipal revenue goes to a liquidation fund for the settlement of debts dating from Civil War and reconstruction days. In constructing the present parkway near the Yacht Club, Mr. Behrman found no money available. He borrowed \$175,000 from the New Orleans Railway and Light Company in return for a franchise. The understanding is that the loan will never be repaid. His efforts in bringing to realization the Public Belt Railway, a dream of many years, his great interest in education, and his personal trips over the United States to advertise New Orleans deserve mention although they belong to earlier years. The Mothers' Club indicated its appreciation of his efforts in the field of education by presenting a loving

³⁷ These statements are based on an inspection trip which the author made in the spring of 1928.

cup.³⁸ Against these accomplishments Mayor Behrman's opponents placed his lack of sympathy for prohibition, his allegiance to the "Regular" organization, his support of horse racing, and his indifference to such reforms as civil service. The mayor answered by designating "the majority of the 'reformers'" as "merely the 'outs'" and retorted, "The idea that civil service destroys political organization such as the Regulars is all nonsense. I prefer the appointive system because it gives better control of the subordinates."³⁹

Of "fine physique and of neat personal appearance," Martin Behrman attained a height of five feet, seven and a half inches. As a young man he weighed one hundred and thirty pounds. However, as he grew older, he filled out rather considerably and finally weighed two hundred and thirty pounds. He was of a brunette type, with dark hair and brown eyes, and wore a rather bushy mustache and heavy eye brows. His face was full and his nose aquiline. He usually dressed somewhat formally, with a black bow-tie, stiff cuffs, a dark suit, a handkerchief in breast pocket, and a single ring on one of his fingers.⁴⁰ Altogether Mr. Behrman achieved more than the average physical distinction. He smoked at least forty cigars a day, enjoyed fishing, rummy, and travel, and did full justice to the dishes of Antoine's, where he had a private room and luncheon bills of \$150 to \$200 per month.⁴¹

His personal characteristics were striking. A "most likeable fellow" of great personal magnetism, he had "few equals and no superiors as a mixer" perhaps because he had a "pleasing disposition, genial manner, and graceful bearing." Mr. Behrman had a remarkable memory for faces,

³⁸ *New Orleans States*, October 17, 1912.

³⁹ "Story of His Life," *New Orleans Item*, November 1, 1922, p. 6.

⁴⁰ See the *Times-Picayune*, October 31, 1920, p. 13; May 3, 1925, p. 6; and May 5, 1925.

⁴¹ The author is indebted to Mr. W. S. Behrman for this information.

prided himself on seeing callers, a whole room-full of whom he could greet and in a surprisingly short time send on their way rejoicing, handled difficult matters with diplomacy and tact in spite of a sense of candor, and "never refused an invitation . . . that was within the range of physical possibility." His secretary, Mr. J. P. Coleman, recalls a feat involving the introduction by name of fifty persons, most of whom he had merely casually met, without a single slip-up.⁴² Mr. Behrman labored so diligently that he "answered every letter," delighted in representing his city at public gatherings either in New Orleans or elsewhere, and even found time to take part as a masker in several Mardi Gras festivals. Some one has declared that his dominant characteristic was that "he developed with the situation."⁴³ During early days Mr. Behrman spoke in public frequently but rather ineffectively. As he aged, he became one of the most eloquent speakers in all of New Orleans. He used the extempore method quite largely, referred to outstanding persons in the audience by name, and included numerous anecdotes. His sense of humor is illustrated by an incident involving a visit of the son-in-law of William Jennings Bryan to New Orleans. This son-in-law, being somewhat of a painter, sought the consent of several prominent persons to sit for portraits. Mayor Behrman happened to be the first to sit but could not recognize his portrait when completed. Thinking that this was due to some defect in his artistic sense, he showed the portrait one day to a friend. "Well, well, a most excellent likeness," said his friend. "Who do you think it is?" inquired the mayor. The answer came: "Why don't you know? John Wilkes Booth, who shot Lincoln."⁴⁴

⁴² Mr. Coleman, long the Mayor's secretary, aided the author materially especially with anecdotes illustrating characteristics.

⁴³ A. W. Newlin, *New Orleans States*, January 12, 1926, p. 4.

⁴⁴ The author is indebted to Mr. J. F. Coleman for this incident.

Few political leaders have so openly allied themselves with social and economic organizations as did Mayor Behrman. A partial list of organizations to which he belonged would include the Merchants' and Manufacturers' Bureau, Elks, Press Club, Knights of Columbus, W. O. W., Benevolent Knights of America, German Benevolent Association, Ancient Order of Druids, Young Men's Social and Benevolent Association, Southern Yacht Club, Loyal Order of Moose, French Opera Club, Jovians, Surf Club, Young Men's Gymnastic Club, Rotary Club, and Chess, Checkers, and Whist Club. Mr. Behrman got along very well with these societies, perhaps because he was "always a booster." The mayor at one time or another served as a trustee of Tulane University, the New Orleans Public Library, and the Delgado Trade School.

For forty-one years Mayor Behrman communed and rented a pew at Holy Name of Mary Roman Catholic Church. In spite of disagreements with the archbishop over such matters as racing he remained unusually close to the church. His friend, Father Peter M. H. Wynhoven, in delivering the funeral sermon at old St. Louis Cathedral, characterized him as a "clean living, highly moral man with simple child-like faith following his religion" and remarked that "no one will ever guess the extent of his quiet and unobtrusive charity."⁴⁵ Even the negro Methodists eulogized Mr. Behrman through their bishop, Robert E. Jones, after this fashion, "Almost to a man we were Behrmanites. . . . We had learned to regard him as eminently fair in all his dealings and found him interested in our progress as a race."⁴⁶

It is important to note that Mr. Behrman never possessed any great amount of wealth. His manner of living and

⁴⁵ *New Orleans States*, January 13, 196, p. 5.

⁴⁶ *Times-Picayune*, January 14, 1926, p. 6.

modest house might indicate that. His salary as mayor amounted to \$10,000 with an allowance of \$2,500 for entertaining. As an active vice-president of the American Bank and Trust Company he received a salary of \$6,000 per year. His name did not appear on boards of directors of business concerns as it did on political and social boards. In his early days he had been president of the Algiers Democrat Company and also of the Cosmopolitan Bottling Company, neither of great financial strength. He left an estate of \$25,544.⁴⁷

The Choctaw Club, with its seventeen divisions, occupies a place in New Orleans politics similar to that of Tammany Hall in New York City. It was founded March 12, 1897, with 138 members. Mr. Behrman was a charter member, one of a few life members, and a member of the executive committee. Gradually he augmented his power in the club and finally after 1912 stood out as its dominant figure. In 1922 he served as chairman of the executive committee. Mr. Behrman cannot be designated as especially harsh or unreasonable. Indeed the *New Orleans Times-Democrat* complained as early as 1912 that his "discipline was lax" and that "disloyalty was not punished."⁴⁸ He refused to harbor grudges and yet did not attempt to conceal his anger at times. Altogether he possessed much ability as an organizer and especially excelled as a presiding officer because of his success in maintaining order, expediting business, and sensing obstructive moves. Mr. Behrman had an excellent memory even in detailed matters, labored persistently, found it possible to form a reasonably accurate judgment of his fellows, and knew when to use tact and when to employ rougher measures. Unlike certain other prominent bosses, he objected to "back room politics," preferring to remain in the

⁴⁷ Available through the courtesy of Mr. W. S. Behrman.

⁴⁸ October 1, 1912, p. 5.

open. He always contended that Tammany Hall might enhance its reputation by abandoning its secretiveness and its skepticism of publicity.⁴⁹ Even in his later days he made an effort to keep in step with progress. Hence in his last campaign he resorted to broadcasting.

In addition to the numerous public offices already mentioned, Martin Behrman held seats on boards such as the Orleans Levee Board and Sewerage and Water Board. He served as president of the League of Louisiana Municipalities at one time and again as fourth vice-president and later president of the League of American Municipalities. He attended Democratic national conventions from 1908 through 1924, served for eight years as chairman of the congressional committee of the First District, and at his death occupied a place as chairman of the Democratic state committee. He found time to lecture at Tulane University on the government and politics of New Orleans and wrote numerous magazine articles and pamphlets.⁵⁰ One marvels at the energy of the man!

⁴⁹ "Story of His Life," November 10, 1922, p. 4, of *New Orleans Item*.

⁵⁰ Some of his articles were entitled, "The Modern City," "The Business of Governing New Orleans," "New Orleans Commission Government," "The Attractions of New Orleans," and "Traveling Men." As mayor he issued booklets entitled "Civic Development—Progress of the City of New Orleans in the Past Ten Years" and "Martin Behrman-Administration Biography 1904-1916."

CHAPTER XIX

"THE GENIAL DOCTOR" ALBERT A. AMES

The career of political boss has not frequently attracted professional men, for of the twenty leaders with which this study has to do only three followed professions. Two of the three were lawyers and one, Doctor Ames, represented medicine. In contrast to a considerable majority of this particular score of city bosses, Mr. Ames was not a native of the place over which he held sway, but this may be partially explained by the fact that Minneapolis had not yet come into being at the year of his birth. Albert Alonzo Ames was born in Garden Prairie, Illinois, on January 18, 1842. In 1851 he moved with his father, Alfred Elisha, and his mother, Martha A. Ames, to Fort Snelling, Minnesota—now a part of the city of Minneapolis. His antecedents were strictly American, with an ancestral line of some prominence running back to colonial days. In Massachusetts, New York, Ohio, Illinois, and Minnesota the Ames family have achieved considerably above the average.¹

Albert Alonzo's father, Doctor Alfred Elisha Ames, emigrated to the middle west from New England as a pioneer physician. First of all he practiced in Illinois and then moved to Minneapolis where he is chronicled as the first physician to locate on soil now occupied by Minneapolis. Records show that he staked out the seventh homestead claim and for years boasted the most pretentious house in the settlement.² He is described as being somewhat of a Puritan in spite of primitive associations and made for himself a place as "one of the most highly respected and

¹ See *Minneapolis Journal*, November 17, 1911, p. 27, and *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, November 17, 1911, pp. 1, 2. Much of this information has been secured for the author by Mr. F. L. Olson from Dr. W. E. Rochford of Minneapolis, a son-in-law of Mayor Ames.

² *Minneapolis Journal*, November 17, 1911, p. 27.

influential citizens of Minneapolis."³ He became greatly interested in the work of the Episcopal Church in the middle west and gave the land now occupied by Gethsemane Episcopal Church of Minneapolis. In addition to being concerned with religious matters, he displayed much enthusiasm in organizing Masonic Lodges and seems to have been the first thirty-third degree Mason in the state. One of Dr. Alfred Elisha's brothers entered politics and served for a time as an American consul.⁴

Besides Albert Alonzo there were six children in the Ames family—all of whom were boys. Albert, ranking as fourth, stood in the very middle of the family. The early education of young Albert centered around Garden Prairie and Minneapolis. According to reports he learned quickly, doing well in school, although distinguishing himself more by social conquests and athletics than by excellence in scholarship. He was graduated from high school in 1857. During his public school days he made money by delivering the *Northwestern Democrat*, a pioneer newspaper, and by assisting a surveyor. Along with his brother, Curtis, he decided to follow his father's profession. Upon finishing high school, he studied in his father's office and spent some time in Chicago attending medical school. Apparently he did well in medicine, for he received an M.D. degree from Rush Medical School in February, 1862.⁵

Very shortly thereafter young Ames returned to Minneapolis and on August 2, 1862, joined the Union army as a private member of Company B, Ninth Minnesota Regiment. After a period of Indian fighting his regiment moved south

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Information available through the courtesy of Mr. F. L. Olson, Director of the Bureau of Municipal Research of the Minneapolis Civic and Commerce Association, and Dr. W. E. Rochford.

⁵ See *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, November 17, 1911, p. 2; *Minneapolis Tribune*, May 8, 1903, p. 2; and *Minneapolis Journal*, November 17, 1911, p. 27.

and he rose through the ranks from private to sergeant, to assistant surgeon, and finally in July, 1864, to surgeon major. He received discharge August 16, 1865, and returned to Minneapolis as a hero. His popularity with the soldiers was such that in 1867 he received election to the state legislature on a soldiers' ticket. However, life in Minneapolis bore heavily on Ames after the excitement of the army and finally caused him to embark on a voyage to California by way of Panama. In California he apparently found no great demand for medical services, for he earned a livelihood as a newspaper man and after a time became managing editor of *Alta California*, a somewhat prominent newspaper of the time. Ames seems to have intended to reside permanently in the West but in 1874 was called to Minneapolis by the death of his father. Family and friends persuaded him to take over his father's practice and hence he did not return to California.⁶

Ames did well from the start and became one of the most popular physicians in the community. His success may be accounted for not only by professional skill but even more by a kindly sympathy with those afflicted. He gave his services without charge to the poor and could be depended upon to answer a call at any hour even though he well knew it would be without fee.⁷ Not only did he thus become an idol of the poverty-stricken but of those perhaps less deserving: such as the drunkards and frequenters of the underworld, for he was quite as willing to sympathize and serve them as he was the poor. The manner in which Doctor Ames rendered service to the unfortunates shows considerable tact on his part. Instead of offending by an out-and-out statement of no charge, he ordinarily said that he did not recall

⁶ See the newspapers referred to above.

⁷ William A. Frisbie, "The Minneapolis House-cleaning," *Proceedings of the Detroit Conference for Good City Government, 1903* (Philadelphia, 1903), p. 109.

just what the bill amounted to but would ascertain and call when he needed the money.⁸

Popularity with the Civil War veterans and volunteer firemen perhaps more than any other one factor brought the Doctor to enter politics. As a fireman he assiduously attended all fires in a "tall silk hat and a long frock coat."⁹ Once embarked on the sea of politics he sought office incessantly with an enthusiasm not frequently encountered among bosses. It has already been noted that he served as a member of the lower house of the ninth legislature of Minnesota.¹⁰ This chanced to be his one and only state office, although he ran for the office of governor on two occasions, for lieutenant governor in 1877, and later for a seat in the House of Representatives of the United States. At one time he received some consideration by the Democrats as a possible nominee for vice-president of the United States. According to Ames he would have been given the nomination except for the opposition of Carter Harrison of Chicago.¹¹ In spite of defeat Mr. Ames continued to hope for an important state or national office. Upon return to face trial for bribery after extradition from New Hampshire, he is reported to have said that he expected to be United States senator before he died.¹²

Municipal politics treated "Doc" somewhat more generously than state politics. He held several minor offices in the city government—chiefly those that offered a position well in the public eye, for his consuming ambition demanded approbation and flattery. Thus in 1875 the Republicans of the Ninth Ward sent him to the board of aldermen and in 1878 he received the position of city health officer. His first

⁸ Information furnished by Dr. W. E. Rochford.

⁹ *Minneapolis Journal*, November 17, 1911, p. 27.

¹⁰ *Legislative Manual of the State of Minnesota, 1903*, p. 105.

¹¹ *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, November 17, 1911, p. 2.

¹² W. A. Frisbie, "The Minneapolis House-cleaning," *Proceedings of the Detroit Conference for Good City Government, 1903*, p. 116.

real triumph came in the election of 1876 when the Republicans selected him as their mayoralty candidate and elected him centennial mayor of Minneapolis. In this office he proved rather an indifferent success but conducted city affairs with apparent decency. At the expiration of his term he dropped out of sight for a time, although he held a minor office and unsuccessfully sought the office of lieutenant governor.

The next achievement in the realm of public office came in 1882. Ames fought desperately for the Republican nomination as mayor but having failed that, he contented himself with Democratic backing. To the consternation of the Republicans he ensconced himself in the office of mayor by a plurality of about 1,800 votes. This term as mayor developed certain scandals. However, his friends argued eloquently for his innocence and few attached any great onus to Ames. He even ran for reelection in 1884 against George A. Pillsbury, a member of the flour family, who represented the Republicans. The returns, after an unusually bitter campaign, indicated a Democratic defeat by approximately six thousand votes. Nevertheless, in 1886 "The Genial Doctor" appeared on the mayoralty scene as lively as ever and as a Democrat won election by about the same margin that he had lost two years earlier. During the third term there arose such odors of corruption in the city government that no one could well doubt the guilt of the mayor. The editor of the *Minneapolis Journal*, in a paper before the Detroit Conference for Good City Government, characterized Ames' third term as "a stench, an offence against honesty, decency, and even the ordinary safety of the common citizen."¹³ "Doc" left office at the expiration of his term in 1888 with a reputation for corruptness, and his administration received mention for the next twelve years as the "notorious Ames

¹³ See the *Proceedings*, p. 109.

administration."¹⁴ Indeed it left such a bad taste in the mouth of Minneapolis that local historians make the barest reference to Mayor Ames.

Shortly after his vindication in 1886 "Doc" Ames put his name in the pot of those who aspired to the Democratic nomination for the office of governor of Minnesota. Largely through the aid of his soldier friends he secured the nomination.¹⁵ The Republicans put up A. R. Gill for the office. Both parties estimated the odds in their favor, provided they campaigned vigorously. Mayor Ames began by delivering an acceptance speech calculated to draw in the soldiers, farmers, and laboring classes. Among other things he said: "I feel thankful and gratified at the honor you have conferred upon me as Democratic candidate for governor of Minnesota. . . . I candidly believe that a new era is dawning, and that Minnesota is ready to go back to the old Jeffersonian doctrine, namely, that the people rule. I believe that they have borne long enough without murmuring at ring rule. . . . I have been made the instrument at the hands of the people to saw in through the infernal ring of the Republican party. . . . There are three important points I would have you consider. The first is the fact that the old soldiers who fought in the rebellion and gave all but their life's blood are becoming old and decrepit. . . . In this great state there should be a home where the soldier can go in his old age and not be sent to the poor houses. . . . The two other points I would have you consider are the rights of the laboring and farmer classes. . . . I would simply ask that planks in reference to these matters find a place in your platform because the laboring classes have three times elevated me to the position of mayor of Minneapolis."¹⁶ He subsequently traveled over most of the state in a special train and pro-

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 109-110.

¹⁵ *Minneapolis Tribune*, September 15, 1886.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

claimed himself the "friend and champion of the laboring people."¹⁷ He boasted of his poverty and the fact that he was in debt and designated himself "a ring buster, not a ring maker."¹⁸ Just before the election the Republicans staged a parade in Minneapolis and won considerable sympathy by charging the Amesites with hiring thugs to attack them with stones and clubs.¹⁹ When the returns indicated a Republican victory by 2,397 votes, the Democrats cried out that they had been cheated and Mayor Ames proceeded to take the oath of office as governor and start a contest.²⁰ Many persons acquainted with the situation have since adjudged Ames the real victor.²¹

Through all these years "The Man of the People," as "Doc" liked to be called, maintained his bar-room associations, largely because they were of the type to shower a genial and generous comrade with liberal flattery. Gradually he descended from mere good fellowship to heavy drinking and loose living. Irwin A. Gardner, a student in the mayor's office, later testified before a jury trying his master on the charge of bribery that Mr. Ames drank so freely that money could not be paid him except at infrequent intervals.²² Ames himself admitted on the witness stand that he had been "an habitual user of intoxicants."²³

Not long after the expiration of the third term as mayor "Doc" separated from his wife and family and set up a second establishment. He had married a Miss Sarah Straut, daughter of Captain Richard Straut of Minneapolis. The first Ames family comprised four children. A son, John

¹⁷ *Minneapolis Tribune*, October 10, 1886, p. 1.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, October 27, 1886, p. 1, and October 30, 1886, p. 1.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, November 2, 1886, p. 1.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, November 8, 1886, p. 1.

²¹ See Oscar F. G. Day, *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, November 18, 1911, p. 6.

²² *New York Tribune*, May 3, 1903, 6:1.

²³ *Minneapolis Tribune*, May 17, 1903, p. 1.

W., held a position as engineer at St. Peter's State Hospital for the Insane. Another son, Charles C., lived in Washington until his death, and a third son, Frank E., died during childhood. A lone daughter, Effie, married Dr. W. E. Rochford, a Minneapolis physician.²⁴ The first Mrs. Ames, described as a woman of admirable character, died in 1900, and the children found it necessary to invoke the aid of the police in keeping their father off the premises on the day of the last rites. Notwithstanding the police he appeared in a rattle-trap on the opposite side of the street from the residence where the funeral was held, sat smoking, and in general created a disgraceful scene. As the funeral cortège passed toward the cemetery, he whipped up his horse and crossed it and recrossed it as it moved onward.²⁵ The public, well-aware of the situation, admirably bore out the Doctor's contention that "municipalities are forgetful and forgiving" by electing him for the fourth time mayor of Minneapolis. Shortly after his wife's death Dr. Ames married a second time and left at his death a wife and a fourteen-year-old child of the second marriage, Maurine.

In maturity "Doc" Ames was a man of considerable magnificence. Indeed he impressed some of his fellow-citizens as "one of the most handsome men that ever lived in the city."²⁶ "A commanding, soldierly figure, erect, with an eye that drew people," he stood more than six feet in height and at his prime weighed a little over two hundred pounds.²⁷ In personality exceedingly winning because of cordiality, sympathy, generosity, easy-bearing, loyalty, and geniality, he yet lacked self-control. Unfortunately for himself he was

²⁴ Information available through the courtesy of Mr. F. L. Olson and Dr. W. E. Rochford.

²⁵ See W. A. Frisbie, "The Minneapolis House-cleaning," *Proceedings of the Detroit Conference for Good City Government, 1903*, p. 110, and Lincoln Steffens, *The Shame of the Cities*, (New York, 1904), p. 67.

²⁶ Information secured by Mr. F. L. Olson.

²⁷ *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, November 18, 1911, p. 6.

remarkably vain, allowed himself to be ridiculously influenced by flattery, stood out as a "poor judge of men," and regarded himself as a martyr when trouble presented itself. "He liked conversation" and possessed "a far-reaching voice, a good fund of humor, and a friend-neighbor style." As "a strong speaker," "few on the platform could match him." He was "exceptionally kind to children" and "possessed a splendid memory of faces and names."²⁸

Professionally Dr. Ames surpassed the average physician. But his interest in politics speedily eclipsed his interest in medicine. Ordinarily he was content to allow followers to exercise the power and collect the profits as long as he received the honors attached to any position. Nevertheless, during his fourth and last term as mayor he suddenly acquired an appetite for money as well as praise. Obviously his proclivities good and bad made the accumulation of any considerable fortune impossible. The inventory filed with the probate court showed his fortune to consist of no real estate, two watches valued at two hundred dollars, office furniture appraised at \$62.50, surgical instruments and miscellaneous goods valued at \$35.00, and a bank account containing \$1,116.44.²⁹ Altogether, therefore, he left an estate worth about \$1,413.94.

Without doubt "The Genial Doctor" was one of the easiest of easy bosses. His word of command frequently amounted to nothing at all, and he himself found it well-nigh impossible to refuse any request made by a favorite. His followers, who probably did not exceed fifteen hundred in number, dominated him more than he did them. Lacking in foresight and shrewdness his organization had little stability

²⁸ *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, November 18, 1911, p. 6.

²⁹ The inventory of the Ames' estate is available through the courtesy of James G. Kehoe, Clerk of the Probate Court of Minneapolis and Hennepin County.

and held together largely because of the greed of its members.

Needless to say Dr. Ames possessed few of the puritanic qualities of his father. One who knew him characterized him as "unfortunate in home life and personal habits."³⁰ Although the elder doctor had been active in the Episcopal Church, his son had no love for religion. As he advanced in years his bitterness toward the church increased in intensity until it finally burst out into open hostility.³¹ However, he interested himself in fraternal orders and occupied a place of some prominence in numerous Minneapolis lodges. As a Mason he stood forth as master, high priest, and commander; as an Elk he held the office of first exalted ruler; as a Knight of Pythias he filled the offices of grand chancellor and chancellor commander; and he also belonged to the George Morgan Post of G. A. R.³² His chief hobby was game hunting.

In 1888 "Doc" met a defeat when he ran for a seat on the park board. Again in 1898 he lost out when he represented the independents in the mayoralty race. He polled only 5,266 votes while the winner rolled up 16,066. Perceiving in 1900 that there was slight hope for a mayoralty nomination in Democratic ranks he changed his political skin again. The year 1900 happened to be the first in which the primary election law, which allowed members of any party to vote for candidates of another party, operated. In as much as there was no special contest among the Republicans, Dr. Ames instructed his followers to insert his name in the Republican column. By this bit of strategy he gained nomination by a narrow margin. The Republicans were considerably upset when the ballots revealed the state of affairs,

³⁰ See Oscar F. G. Day, *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, November 18, 1911, p. 6.

³¹ Information available through the courtesy of Mr. F. L. Olson.

³² *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, November 17, 1911, p. 2.

but because of the effect they feared a split might have on the state ticket which was being elected at the same time and because the election seemed to be doubtful in its outcome, they finally took no steps. "Notorious" Ames rode into victory by about forty-five hundred votes along with the remainder of the Republican ticket and began a fourth term as mayor of Minneapolis, after having been "damned politically, socially, and professionally" by his past record.³³ He admitted his mistakes but professed to have reformed and begged for an opportunity to redeem his wretched past. His brief inaugural address ran as follows: "Mr. President and Gentlemen of the City Council! We have met here today for the purpose of observing the time-honored custom of changing the executive and legislative branches of the city government in accordance with the will of the great governing power—the people. That power, before whom we are all loyal subjects, have designated you as the local law-makers, whose duty it is to invest public money carefully and judiciously in needed improvements for the good of the great majority of our people. All departments of the city government should receive, as they undoubtedly will, your careful judgment and care, that perfection, as near as may be, is attained to meet public necessities. The developing tendencies of the age is [*sic.*] that special or class legislation should be avoided. I recommend to your careful consideration the review of the city submitted by Mayor Gray and the various departments in the city. I trust that pleasant relations may exist between the legislative and executive branches of the city government."³⁴

As mayor or as boss Dr. Ames did not possess power over the entire government of Minneapolis, for the mayor of that city in 1900 had actual power only in the police de-

³³ W. A. Frisbie, "The Minneapolis House-cleaning," *Proceedings of the Detroit Conference for Good City Government, 1903*, p. 109.

³⁴ *Minneapolis Tribune*, January 8, 1901, p. 2.

partment. The heads of departments elected by the people controlled the other administrative branches and made appointments subject to the confirmation of the council. Hence the Ames organization did not find it possible to take over the entire government of Minneapolis. However, it lost no time in revamping the police department to carry out its program. For one thing it replaced one hundred and five of the two hundred and sixteen members of the force with imported ruffians and political henchmen and boasted a drill squad that exceeded six feet and two inches in height.³⁵ "The Genial Mayor's" brother, Fred, a "week, vacillating individual, vacant of initiative or moral individuality," who had been a colonel of the Thirteenth Minnesota Regiment in the Philippines, became chief of police.³⁶ Norman W. King, an ex-gambler and frequenter of the underworld, headed the detective squad, and Irwin A. Gardner, a student at Hamline University, who studied medicine in "Doc's" office, took charge of the courtesans of the city.

With the reorganization of the police department effected, there began a system of corruption which even Lincoln Steffens, "Prince of the Muck-rakers," branded as being "for deliberateness, invention, and avarice . . . never equaled."³⁷ Thieves, confidence men, gamblers—in short all manner of crooks—invaded Minneapolis soon after the administration got under way. For police protection they paid a lump sum down and so much per month depending upon the volume of business. Through this system of blackmail large revenue accumulated to be divided among "Doc" and his various henchmen.³⁸ But the discipline in the organ-

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

³⁶ W. A. Frisbie, "The Minneapolis House-cleaning," *Proceedings of the Detroit Conference for Good City Government, 1903*, p. 111.

³⁷ *The Shame of the Cities*, p. 69.

³⁸ See W. A. Frisbie, "The Minneapolis House-cleaning," *Proceedings of the Detroit Conference for Good City Government, 1903*, p. 112.

ization itself was so lax and favoritism became so rampant that all manner of jealousies and plots arose within the fold to the damage of its success. Fred Ames, inspired by jealousy of Irwin Gardner, hatched charges that Gardner had withheld certain sums of money collected from the city courtesans. The mayor wavered in the matter, but after pressure had been exerted dismissed perhaps his only loyal follower. Most of the members of the machine were interested only in the profits obtained. Therefore it is not surprising that internal machinations broke whatever efficiency and cohesiveness the machine had and finally wrecked it altogether.

There developed a certain amount of opposition to the Ames regime on the part of the county officers, but for the most part they were not of the caliber to take a stand. After gambling had become notorious, Sheriff Megaarden interfered with that particular evil. However, Ames persuaded Governor Van Sant to remove him from office.⁸⁹

The first real opposition matured after fifteen months of the administration had come and gone. In April, 1902, a grand jury, with Hovey C. Clarke as foreman, assembled. Mr. Clarke, a man of considerable wealth and standing in the community, knew something of city affairs and by his own determination swung the other grand jurors to an investigation of the system. When the state's attorney reported that this was not a proper subject for a grand jury's attention, Foreman Clarke dared excuse him, obtained a substitute, and began the attack.

Although every one knew by report what was going on in the city, it required definite evidence to bring about a reformation. Most of those interested thought that such evidence could not be obtained. However, Mr. Clarke hired some Minneapolis detectives, whom every one knew, to in-

⁸⁹ *Proceedings of the Detroit Conference for Good City Government*, 1903, p. 112.

investigate and see what could be done. Then, having allayed any fear of the machine, he imported detectives from without whom no one knew. Of course the first sleuths obtained nothing, but the second secured enough in the way of concrete evidence to indict and convict two confidence men. The rest was relatively easy, for these men, resting in prison, became so furious at the organization for not rescuing them that they told all they knew.⁴⁰

Chief of Police Fred Ames, Irwin Gardner, Chris Norbeck, all received indictment. "Doc" stood defiant and branded the whole business a "cold-blooded plot."⁴¹ Apparently he did not believe that a grand jury would dare lay hands on "The Man of the People." When his aide, Irwin Gardner, was convicted of bribery, the mayor exclaimed, "I am thunderstruck. . . . I think they are out to get me and I suppose they will press the advantage. The verdict will demoralize every police force in the country."⁴² Before the grand jury could indict him for extortion, conspiracy, and bribe-offering, Ames announced an offer of \$7,000 to manage a hotel at West Baden, Indiana, and intimated that he might resign office.⁴³ Shortly thereafter he went to Indiana and left Minneapolis to take care of itself. From Indiana he attempted to send back orders for a time but finally resigned office in August, 1902, the resignation to take effect on September sixth. It is interesting to note that on the day he announced his intention to resign, he demanded the resignation of his brother as chief of police and spread the report that he himself was in a dying condition.⁴⁴

Prosecution of the several cases went forward rapidly. At the end of the first year twelve persons had been indicted

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 112-113.

⁴¹ *Minneapolis Tribune*, June 7, 1902, p. 1.

⁴² *Ibid.*, June 11, 1902, p. 1.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, May 14, 1902, p. 1.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, August 1, 1902, p. 1.

forty-nine times, five persons had been convicted, and two of the organization members had been committed to prison. Fred Ames stood two trials and finally received a sentence of six and one half years in state prison.

"Doc" took care to remain safely outside of Minnesota after his indictment, although he forfeited certain bonds, which his friends had to make good, by so doing. In February, 1903, agents located him in a small town in New Hampshire to which he had fled from Louisville, Kentucky. The Doctor's second wife had a brother-in-law, Reverend C. H. Chapin, who served the town of Hancock, New Hampshire, as pastor. Perchance remembering the medieval freedom from arrest within the sacred precincts of the church, Ames took refuge in the home of this clergyman.⁴⁵

Steps were at once taken to secure his extradition. In spite of a strong fight on the part of the fugitive, extradition papers issued, and Dr. Ames returned to face trial for receiving a bribe of six hundred dollars from a woman of the streets.⁴⁶ The first trial was concluded in less than two weeks and resulted in a verdict of "guilty."⁴⁷ Irwin A. Gardner, Thomas Brown, the ex-mayor's secretary, and Chris Norbeck, all turned state's evidence and told everything.⁴⁸ Dr. Ames took the stand himself and testified that he had chronic liver and kidney trouble that affected his mind and rendered him irresponsible for his acts at times. He pointed out that his brother had been twice in an insane asylum and that his father and father's mother had died of cancer.⁴⁹ The court passed a sentence of six years in state prison.⁵⁰ But the state supreme court granted a new trial

⁴⁵ *New York Tribune*, February 16, 1903, 2:3.

⁴⁶ *Minneapolis Tribune*, May 1, 1903, p. 1.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, May 8, 1903, p. 1.

⁴⁸ See *Minneapolis Tribune*, May 2, 1903, pp. 1, 2, and May 3, 1903, p. 1.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, May 5, 1903, pp. 1, 2.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, May 17, 1903, p. 1.

and after two subsequent trials the case was dropped. Hence Dr. Ames stayed out of prison.

Conviction in the first trial apparently came as a great surprise to "Doc" Ames. He emerged a white-haired, stooped figure whom few recognized as the magnificent politician of a few months earlier. His sense of martyrdom, however, remained. Instead of attributing the destruction of his machine and his own downfall to corruption and misgovernment he laid it to a plot of a "pine-land ring."⁵¹ Dr. Ames died quite suddenly on November 16, 1911. He practiced medicine until the very day before his passing. To his widow he bequeathed \$1,410.94 and to his surviving children the sum of one dollar each.⁵²

⁵¹ W. A. Frisbie, "The Minneapolis House-cleaning," *Proceedings of the Detroit Conference for Good City Government, 1903*, p. 116.

⁵² The provisions of the will are available through the courtesy of Honorable James G. Kehoe, Clerk of the Probate Court of Minneapolis and Hennepin County.

CHAPTER XX

ABRAHAM RUEF

Lord Bryce once wrote that "no other population in America furnished so good a field for demagoguery" as San Francisco, for "that scum which the westward moving wave of emigration carries on its crest is here stopped, because it can go no further."¹ San Francisco has had many overlords in the course of its existence, but no one of them has held the same prominence that Abe Ruef enjoyed for a brief period of about seven years following 1900.

A native of San Francisco, Mr. Ruef has spent his entire life there from his birth on September 2, 1864, until the present, except for the years when the law secluded him in San Quentin prison across the bay from San Francisco. Apparently he is the only Jew to have gained lordship over one of the larger cities of the United States. His father, Myer, a native of Terney, France, held a record of service in the French army.² Myer Ruef's name first appears in the city directory of 1865 as a dealer in fancy goods. In 1868 he turned to dry goods, in 1891 to real estate, and by 1898 he had gained such affluence as to be listed in large letters as a "Capitalist."³ Abe's mother, a native of Alsace, came with her husband to San Francisco in the early sixties. A sister, Louise, worked as a stenographer in the Ruef law offices, another sister, Mary, taught in the Garfield primary school, while Henrietta, a third sister, apparently married at an early age. An uncle, by the name of Hirsch, belonged to a dry goods firm, and a brother-in-law, A. Altmann, held the

¹ James Bryce, *The American Commonwealth* (3 vols., London, 1888), III, 227, 246-247.

² The author is indebted to Mr. W. H. Nanry, of the San Francisco Bureau of Governmental Research, for information concerning the parents of Mr. Ruef.

³ See p. 383 of the issue of 1866, p. 481 of the 1868-1869 issue, p. 1193 of the 1891 issue, and p. 1446 of the volume for 1898.



Courtesy San Francisco Chronicle

ABRAHAM RUEF

presidency of the San Francisco board of education for a time.

Young Abraham proved a precocious student at school. He finished the grammar and high schools at a very early age, entered the University of California, and was graduated with the class of 1882 at the age of eighteen years. Then he enrolled for the law course in the same university. An honor student in college, young Ruef emerged from law school with an exceptionally brilliant record and began to practice law when just of age. In college Ruef found time for three or four years of Greek, several courses in philosophy, art, and music, and in addition managed to read somewhat extensively on the outside. He spoke seven languages altogether.⁴

As a young lawyer entering politics Ruef first identified himself with good government forces and associated with the late Franklin K. Lane, sometime secretary of the interior, and J. H. Wigmore, dean of the Northwestern University Law School, in a club for political reform.⁵ However, an experience at a state convention soon convinced him that popular government is scarcely feasible in practice, and hence he joined the regular Republican machine, at that time under the domination of the Southern Pacific Railroad. A Republican ward organization made use of him at once as secretary, because he could write easily. A little later Martin Kelly and Phil Crimmins, local Republican bosses of some note, observed Ruef and invited him to become their henchman. Although he would not obey and constantly made demands for greater recognition, the bosses humored him along for some years and made it possible for him to know something of politics from the inside. At the end of the

⁴ See Fremont Older, *My Own Story* (New York, 1926), p. 176; the *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 8, 1907, p. 1, and March 12, 1908; and "Confessions of a Stenographer," *Overland Monthly*, L (1907), 103.

⁵ Franklin Hichborn, *"The System" as Uncovered by the San Francisco Graft Prosecution* (San Francisco, 1915), p. 12.

period he prided himself on being a "young political genius, educated at a University; born master of the ward game, but with the ideals of a cultured mind."⁶

By centering attention on the Latin Quarter of San Francisco, Ruef eventually managed to establish a fair hold over the Republican organization of that section and became a member of the Republican central committee of the city. However, until 1901 no great opportunity presented itself for expanding beyond the limits of the Quarter. In that year Abe organized a Republican Primary League in time to take advantage of a three cornered municipal election which hung in the balance. Because Mayor Phelan had used the police force against the teamsters and allied workers who were on strike, considerable bitter feeling was generated, and the workmen, being advised to avenge themselves by entering politics, nominated Eugene Schmitz as their candidate for mayor. The Republicans, under the domination of the Southern Pacific machine, put up Asa R. Wells, and the Democrats united on J. S. Tobin. No candidate had an undue advantage until Ruef, bolting from the Republicans, swung his Republican League for Schmitz. Eugene Schmitz, prominent in the musicians' union and conductor of the Columbia Theatre orchestra, struck Abe as the most likely candidate for mayor, in as much as he spoke fair English, dressed in taste, and altogether seemed to be of such a character as to make a good idol for the strikers without being positively distasteful to the business element. Managing the campaign personally and placing main emphasis upon economy in government and justice to labor, Ruef successfully directed the combination of Republican Primary League and Union Labor group and won the election.⁷

⁶ Lincoln Steffens, "The Mote and the Beam," *American Magazine*, LXV (1907), 34.

⁷ See H. H. Bancroft, *Retrospection Political and Personal* (New York, 1912), p. 245, and Fremont Older, *My Own Story*, pp. 27-32.

Fremont Older, editor of the *San Francisco Bulletin* and a leading spirit in the graft prosecution, writes that he sent the following message to Mayor Schmitz shortly after his election: "Tell Schmitz that while I fought him in the campaign he is not to let that linger in his mind, but to remember this—that he has in his hands the greatest opportunity that any politician has had in America for many a long year. If he will be really true to Labor, to the people that elected him, and not associate himself with the evil forces in San Francisco, there is nothing that he cannot achieve politically in the United States. . . . Tell him that, and warn him against associating with Abraham Ruef, for Ruef will lead him astray."⁸ The mayor replied that "Ruef was his friend and they were going to stand together." Nevertheless, the "Curly Boss" carried on city affairs without serious corruption until a second term had been assured his candidates. Of course, he lost no time in strengthening himself in the graces of those who sought public favor and were willing to pay. While he always disclaimed any improper relationship in such cases and maintained that he merely acted as any lawyer would for his clients, the volume of business and fees exacted grew so rapidly that they scarcely fitted in with his explanation. From an office occupying one room the Ruef business grew until it occupied a suite of several rooms and employed a staff of five or six legal assistants and numerous clerks. Major West appeared to take general charge, Myer Ruef acted as bookkeeper and cashier, and Miss Louise Ruef handled the stenographic force.⁹

Control of San Francisco came to Mr. Ruef through the workingmen, yet he failed to represent their interests. At election time they concerned him because of their votes, while at other times corporate interests occupied most of his

⁸ *My Own Story*, p. 33.

⁹ See the *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 27, 1907, p. 2; October 3, 1907, p. 2; and January 12, 1908, p. 18.

attention. In spite of this fact the Union Labor party continued its support, and Eugene Schmitz, having received the consent of the "Curly Boss," received a second election in spite of the combined efforts of the Southern Pacific group, the Republicans, and the Democrats to elect John Partridge. It was in this campaign that Francis J. Heney said during the course of a speech in Mechanics' Pavilion, "If the people of San Francisco ever want me to come back and put Abe Ruef in the penitentiary, I'll come."¹⁰ The election of 1903 gave Ruef control over everything in the city and county, except the office of district attorney and the board of supervisors.¹¹

With the second election safely passed, Ruef became more open in his lordship. Some opposition materialized on the part of the *San Francisco Bulletin*, but evidence of a definite nature eluded diligent searchers and the boss had so won the good will of certain interests that it had little chance of accomplishing anything. In the election of 1905 Ruef further extended his power by adding a majority of the members of the board of supervisors to his ranks as well as by reëlecting Schmitz as mayor of the city. Except for the office of the district attorney, the entire government of San Francisco lay quite placidly in the hands of the "Curly Boss" after the election of 1905.¹²

In spite of certain graft with the Chinese gamblers, French restaurants, and a "municipal crib" Mr. Ruef kept out of trouble. In 1905 he not only maintained his flourishing law offices but established headquarters at a well-known French restaurant, the "Pup," where he enjoyed the most intimate contacts with those likely to have profitable business. Rudolph Spreckels later testified that at this stage Ruef had

¹⁰ Fremont Older, *My Own Story*, p. 73.

¹¹ See H. H. Bancroft, *Retrospection Political and Personal*, p. 246.

¹² Theodore Bonnett, *The Regenerators* (San Francisco, 1911), pp. 80-81.

the audacity to call at his office with the suggestion that "he be employed as counsel" for the San Francisco Gas Company, because "he had legal ability and could be of service to the corporation."¹³ Sometime after this the "Curly Boss," according to Mr. Spreckels, repeated his visit with an offer of an issue of city bonds and guaranteed to call a general strike so that the securities might be bid in at his own price.¹⁴

One of the earliest of Mr. Ruef's corrupt deals had to do with the fight trust of San Francisco. The promoters desired permits to stage pugilistic matches and being unable to obtain them through ordinary channels, employed the "Curly Boss" at a retaining fee of \$18,000. The permits issued speedily.¹⁵ A little later the Home Telephone Company craved a San Francisco franchise. Nothing daunted by the fact that the Pacific States Telephone Company already had retained the overlord at a fee of \$1,200 per month, the Home Company offered an outright payment of \$30,000 and obtained a franchise.¹⁶ Then the Pacific Gas and Electric Company proposed to increase the rate on gas to eighty-five cents per thousand cubic feet, although public sentiment opposed such an increase. They paid Abe \$1,000 a month and a lump sum of \$20,000, and the raise took effect without more ado.¹⁷ Moreover, the Parkside Transit Company needed street franchises and paid \$169,350 for *expenses* incident to obtaining them.¹⁸

To adequately handle the business of obtaining franchises and similar favors Mr. Ruef organized the board of super-

¹³ Lincoln Steffens, *Upbuilders* (New York, 1909), p. 263.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 263-264.

¹⁵ *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 12, 1908, p. 1.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, March 31, 1907, p. 1.

¹⁷ Dana Galtin, "Great Cases of Detective Burns," *McClure's Magazine*, XXXVI (1910-11), 395, and the *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 2, 1907, p. 35.

¹⁸ *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 5, 1908, p. 18.

visors of the city and county of San Francisco into a workable machine. Supervisor James L. Gallagher acted as his agent, made arrangements with the various members in regard to their votes, and disbursed the bribe money after the measures had been passed satisfactorily. Not all the supervisors, of course, belonged to the inner circle, although the character of the board as a whole was very inferior. Inclined to be suspicious, the "Curly Boss" always made it a point to attend at least the Sunday evening caucuses of the board to see that all progressed nicely.¹⁹

Collections from courtesans, gambling joints, and French restaurants flowed into the coffers of the boss as *fees*; yet they, together with the fight, gas rate, telephone, and Park-side deals, might have gone by without serious notice, had not a frameup with the United (Street) Railways aroused the ire of the Spreckelses. The Sutter Street line of the United Railways depended on underground cables for motive power in 1905. This power did not prove very satisfactory, and with the approval of the public the company decided to electrify its line. However, instead of running the electric trolleys underground, the company favored the overhead system maintaining that it could be installed more cheaply and would ultimately prove more satisfactory. Civic pride opposed the littering of the streets with trolleys and poles, and hence the permit for electrification could not pass the board of supervisors.

The Spreckelses have had a far from placid reputation in San Francisco for a good many years. Claus, the father, once feeling himself personally insulted because the president of the local gas company neglected to speak to him, took revenge by building a rival gas system.²⁰ When the United Railways persisted in demanding an overhead trolley permit,

¹⁹ *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 25, 1907, p. 3; September 26, 1907, p. 2; and May 10, 1908, p. 52.

²⁰ Theodore Bonnett, *The Regenerators*, p. 42.

the Spreckelses objected in as much as the line passed by their residence and finally organized the Municipal Street Railways of San Francisco, with a capital of fourteen million dollars, for the purpose of constructing underground conduit street railways in San Francisco.²¹ A short time later the earthquake and fire laid waste San Francisco.

Mayor Schmitz handled the very difficult situation brought on by the catastrophe with ability, while Mr. Ruef served on the committee to reestablish order.²² Most of the citizens busied themselves with the weighty matter of reconstructions, with the result that the electrification controversy passed unheeded except by the United Railways. Before any one realized what was what, the United Railways began to rebuild their lines with overhead trolleys and showed a permit granted by the supervisors as their authority. It required, of course, no deep power of penetration to perceive that some subterranean arrangement had been made whereby in return for some sort of consideration the supervisors had granted the permit.

After the second election of Mayor Schmitz, Fremont Older, managing editor of the *San Francisco Bulletin*, heard enough talk about graft to recall to mind the promise of help made by Mr. Heney. Hence he journeyed to Washington for a conference with Mr. Heney and President Roosevelt. Mr. Heney, then engaged in the prosecution of the Oregon land fraud cases, agreed to come to San Francisco as soon as the Oregon situation would allow, provided the sum of \$100,000 would be available for expenses. Upon his return to San Francisco Older interviewed former Mayor Phelan and Rudolph Spreckels and received their assurances of backing. Spreckels, according to the testimony of Mr.

²¹ *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 18, 1907, p. 2. Fremont Older's *My Own Story*, pp. 77-81, places this incident earlier.

²² *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 30, 1907, p. 18, and December 3, 1908, p. 16.

Older, said, "Older, I'll go into this! I'll put my money in this and back it to the limit. But I want one understanding—that our investigation must lead to Herrin. Herrin is the man who has corrupted our state. . . . He has corrupted our legislature and courts. He has corrupted supervisors of counties and coroners and sheriffs and judges."²³ Shortly after the earthquake Mr. Heney arrived in San Francisco.

District Attorney Langdon happened to be the sole officeholder in 1906-1907 not definitely subject to Ruef. Therefore, arrangements were made whereby Heney received appointment as assistant or deputy district attorney to carry on the prosecution of the boodlers. When the news of the appointment came to light and Heney began to investigate, Ruef ordered Acting Mayor Gallagher to remove Langdon and decided to occupy the office of district attorney himself. The plan might have worked had not the prosecutors got wind of it and fortified themselves. When the "Curly Boss" arrived to take possession, they refused to surrender and were upheld by the appellate court of California.²⁴

Mr. Heney pushed on the investigation, impaneled a jury, and began returning indictments against Ruef, Mayor Schmitz, and the supervisors. Altogether the "Curly Boss" had more than one hundred indictments returned against him for extortion, bribery, and kindred sins.²⁵ When the situation seemed serious, Ruef took to his heels and remained in seclusion until located by Detective William J. Burns at the Trocadero Road House some distance from San Francisco. The sheriff owed such allegiance to the boss that it seemed essential to secure the prisoner's presence by providing a special guard and jail. At first Elisor Biggy used the

²³ Fremont Older, *My Own Story*, pp. 74-75, 80-81. The Herrin here referred to headed the Southern Pacific political machine.

²⁴ *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 28, 1907, p. 7.

²⁵ *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 10, 1908. In January, 1908, Mr. Ruef faced 122 indictments but several more were returned.

St. Francis Hotel as his jail, but luncheons for the prisoner at the rate of \$5.15 each soon impressed the public who were paying the bills, and the residence of Mayor Schmitz then became the place of confinement.²⁶

The prosecution began its work by ingeniously planting a trap to catch the supervisors. The Ruef group had introduced into the board of supervisors a bill to make it illegal for young women under the age of eighteen years to attend skating rinks without their mothers in order to frighten G. M. Roy whom Mr. Older had won over to the reformers by a threat of publicity. Roy proposed to offer bribes to three supervisors to have the bill killed in a place where the prosecution could be witnesses. The plan worked out perfectly, and the evidence obtained persuaded the three supervisors and eventually fifteen other supervisors to turn state's evidence under immunity contracts.²⁷ With Ruef under an elisor the prosecution began to labor with him, employing methods that rather smack of the inquisition chamber. To a certain extent Detective Burns and assistants broke down his resistance, and he agreed to make a complete confession under promise of immunity, but all in all they received little for considerable expenditure of energy.²⁸ Finally after about a year had elapsed, the prosecution, because Ruef would not testify that money had been given him specifically for bribes, maintained that his coöperation had not been satisfactory and, therefore, declared the immunity contract void. A storm of protest on the part of Ruef supporters arose, and a great deal of bitterness resulted. Rabbis Bernard Kaplan and Jacob Nieto, who had largely brought about the confession by pleas from the prisoner's aged and infirm father and mother, branded the action as rank treach-

²⁶ *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 11, 1907, p. 2.

²⁷ Fremont Older, *My Own Story*, pp. 96-101.

²⁸ *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 31, 1908, p. 2; March 7, 1908, p. 1; and May 16, 1908, p. 1.

ery. A number of affidavits, setting forth both sides of the cause, appeared from the two rabbis, Ruef, Heney, Langdon, Foreman Oliver of the grand jury, and Professor G. W. Bunnell, a former instructor of Ruef in the University of California.²⁹ Ruef said, "I was to be given immunity if I would tell the truth. So I told them everything. . . . Then, before the Ford trial, . . . I was told that I must testify that Ford had given me the money for the purpose of bribing the supervisors, that something had been said between us to that effect. This was not true. Nothing was ever said as to the way the money was to be used. We spoke of it always as an attorney's fee. . . . I refused to testify that Ford had ever said anything in regard to bribing the supervisors, and for this reason the immunity agreement with me was broken, and I was sentenced to San Quentin for fourteen years."³⁰ So the Ruef case went forward to trial.

By hook and crook the "Curly Boss" attempted to stay the trial. He alleged as a last resort that the judge of the court could not give a fair trial because of bias. However, the supreme court refused to disqualify him.³¹ The trial on the indictment charging that Mr. Ruef had given a bribe to ex-Supervisor J. J. Phillips in connection with the Parkside Transit deal finally began in April, 1908. After six weeks of sessions morning, afternoon, and evening the jury deliberated for forty-three hours and failed to agree.³²

In November, 1908, a second indictment, alleging that "Curly Boss" had offered a bribe to ex-Supervisor J. J. Furey in connection with the same Parkside Transit deal, came to

²⁹ See the *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 29, 1908, p. 1; March 7, 1908; March 10, 1908, p. 2; March 11, 1908, p. 2; March 12, 1908, p. 1; and March 18, 1908, p. 1.

³⁰ Fremont Older, *My Own Story*, p. 166.

³¹ *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 9, 1908, p. 2.

³² *Ibid.*, May 10, 1908, p. 52; May 11, 1908, p. 14; and May 20, 1908, p. 2.

trial after seventy-one days had been consumed in examining more than fifteen hundred prospective jurors. During this trial Morris Haas, who claimed that he had been insulted in the course of the jury examination, shot down Mr. Heney in open court and seriously wounded him.³³ Then Hiram Johnson, just entering on his political career, carried on the case for the prosecution. The jury reached a verdict of "guilty" in December, 1908, and Judge Lawlor sentenced Ruef to fourteen years in San Quentin prison.³⁴ The supreme court granted a rehearing of the case, and except for the legal technicality involving the absence of a justice from the state Ruef might have gone free. However, the court finally reversed itself, and Ruef went to prison.³⁵

Without doubt the two trials of the "Curly Boss" hold a prominent place among such trials in the United States on account of the intense bitterness that seemed well nigh to split open the city into two hostile camps. Mr. Heney was shot down in court, and the family of Supervisor Gallagher narrowly escaped death when their house was blown up. The numerous other cases, involving Mayor Schmitz, Patrick Calhoun of the United Railways, John Glass of the Pacific States Telephone Company, and many others, heightened the feeling. In all three hundred and eighty-three indictments issued from grand juries. Yet only four convictions resulted, and two of them were set aside by higher courts. Mr. Heney ran personally for the office of district attorney in the election of 1909, but the machine candidate, Charles Fickert, received a plurality of ten thousand votes. When the new attorney took office, he announced that all papers relating to the graft cases had disappeared and, therefore, dropped the matter.

³³ *Ibid.*, November 14, 1908, p. 1.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, December 30, 1908, p. 1.

³⁵ See Fremont Older, *My Own Story*, pp. 145-148.

Because he prided himself on an elaborate coiffure of curls, Mr. Ruef received the designation "Curly Boss." He is five feet and seven inches tall, weighs about one hundred and sixty pounds, has black hair, dark eyes, and the nose typical of his people. Being vain in personal appearance, during his reign as boss he dressed with great care, had his hair curled at the barbers, and drove around in San Francisco in a sporty motor car, known as the "Green Lizard."³⁶

Mentally Mr. Ruef was very keen and shrewd. Moreover, he manifested interest in cultural subjects. Editor Older characterizes him as "ambitious, clever, energetic, desiring to make a place and an honorable name for himself in the world's affairs . . . with a keen insight into human nature."³⁷ He spoke easily and even volubly and could be so courteous on occasion that even those who ordinarily objected to Hebrews found no fault. Endowed with more than the average skill as a lawyer, his eagerness for *fees* led to practices common among shyster lawyers rather than among first rate ones. While he did not smoke and used liquor rather moderately, his morals reached such a level that a contemporary once wrote that he had "more vices than Priam did children."³⁸ He has remained single through the years.

As a politician Mr. Ruef prided himself on a "reputation for square dealing," but as a matter of fact his word could not be relied on, his actions must frequently be classed as treacherous, and although touchingly kind on occasion, meanness too often overshadowed everything else.³⁹ Report

³⁶ See the *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 7, 1907, p. 1, and Dana Galtin, "Great Cases of Detective Burns," *McClure's Magazine*, XXXVI, 399. The author is indebted to Mr. W. H. Nanry, of the San Francisco Bureau of Governmental Research, for aid in this field.

³⁷ *My Own Story*, pp. 162-163.

³⁸ Theodore Bonnett, *The Regenerators*, p. 123.

³⁹ See Dana Galtin, "Great Cases of Detective Burns," *McClure's Magazine*, XXXVI, 388, 391.

has it that even his attorneys had to sue for their fees, and it was generally believed that he did not object to collecting in person from women of the underworld.⁴⁰ Always dissatisfied and disobedient when he served other political leaders, he had no tolerance for independence in his own ranks and won the reputation of being a hard master. His organization lacked stability; yet while he ruled, he ruled more completely than bosses have usually been able to do. Quick to bark and show his teeth, the "Curly Boss" speedily backed down when a crisis came. It is reported by Detective Burns that he feared the populace might use the gravel in front of his place of confinement for stoning him and begged to be removed to a less dangerous place.⁴¹

Although the "Curly Boss" pretended to be the agent of organized labor, he depended on business firms desiring public favor as few bosses have dared to do. Public service corporations contributed most of his wealth, and French restaurants, saloons, fight trusts, and various dives dug up much of the remainder. Several interests, including a group of bankers, openly sympathized with him during his trial and aided as best they could.⁴² Just how much his fortune may have amounted to before the downfall cannot be estimated with any degree of certainty. However, in 1908, after large expenditures had been made, Nicholas Laing, real estate expert, valued his real property submitted to the court as surety at \$837,738 exclusive of mortgages.⁴³ An estimate made by reliable authorities in 1925 placed his wealth at approximately \$500,000.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 390-391. See also "Ruef, A Jew Under Torture," *Overland Magazine*, L (1907), 518.

⁴¹ Dana Galtin, "Great Cases of Detective Burns," *McClure's Magazine*, XXXVI, 391.

⁴² See H. H. Brancroft, *Retrospection Political and Personal*, p. 282.

⁴³ *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 7, 1908, p. 10.

⁴⁴ Information available through the courtesy of W. H. Nanry.

The Native Sons of the Golden West, which included in its membership many of the most prominent Californians, made the "Curly Boss" a grand trustee. However, after the indictments it ousted him without compunction.⁴⁵ He also belonged to the Eagle Lodge. Mr. Ruef nominally attached himself to the Jewish Synagogue, although religion had no great place in his life. His parents seem to have been faithful members of the Synagogue and held the friendship of two influential rabbis of San Francisco, Bernard Kaplan and Jacob Nieto.

After four years and five months of prison service Mr. Ruef, largely through the efforts of Fremont Older who had stood forth in the graft prosecution but later decided that Ruef was the victim of his environment, received a parole and returned to San Francisco. Since 1915 the city directories have listed his occupation as real estate. During the years since his release from prison he has apparently taken no part in politics. However, he seems to have amassed a "good-sized fortune" by constructing neighborhood stores in the residential sections of San Francisco. He contributes to the community chest and in general manifests an interest in civic affairs.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 1, 1907, p. 1, and March 31, 1908, p. 1.

⁴⁶ The author is indebted to Mr. W. H. Nanry, of the San Francisco Bureau of Governmental Research, for material embodied in this section.

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